



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVIII

SECOND SESSION

Number 4

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

Monday

3 April 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I welcome to the public gallery today Mr. Doug Dunsmore who is the subject of a Member's statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today, we have the Members for the Districts of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Mount Pearl North, Bonavista, Placentia West – Bellevue and St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to pay tribute to the Hermitage-Sandyville Volunteer Fire Department for celebrating its 40th anniversary this past December. I have always had great respect and admiration for firefighters' efforts as volunteers, the countless hours, the high-risk situations and the constant search for funding support.

It is an honour to share their accomplishment and pride in celebrating this 40th milestone, and I commend and thank them for the decades of professionalism and commitment to ensure the safety of residents. It is remarkable that we have so many long-standing volunteer firefighters in this rural area, where it can be extremely challenging to recruit volunteer firefighters. We surely have great people, dedicated to service and fortified with proper training. As dangerous as it can be at times, I am sure it must also be a very fulfilling and rewarding role to take on.

I ask that all hon. Members join me in congratulating and thanking the Hermitage-Sandyville Volunteer Fire Department for 40 years of outstanding dedication. On behalf of the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune and the many local citizens who benefit from your courage and support, I truly say thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate and recognize Gemma Hickey who was named the Human Rights Champion in Newfoundland and Labrador for 2016. On December 8, 2016, the Human Rights Commission granted Gemma this recognition as they have made a meaningful, lifelong contribution to human rights here in the province.

Gemma is an extraordinary activist and community leader. Gemma's passion and commitment to helping others is inspiring. Gemma is the founder of Pathways, an emerging organization that offers support to survivors of clergy abuse. Last year, the Hope Walk attracted a great deal of support and attention. But Gemma is best known for co-leading the movement that legalized same-sex marriage in Canada. Gemma is a force for social change, and will continue to do great things in life, mostly for others.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating Gemma Hickey on so many accomplishments to date and wish Gemma the best in the future, as I'm sure there's a lot more good work to come.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, yesterday was Autism Awareness Day, a day where many wear blue to open a dialogue about autism. However, to people such as Treshana Gosse of Harcourt every day is Autism Awareness Day.

Five years ago, Treshana gave birth to Georgia, a bright young girl on the autism spectrum. The irony of Georgia's birth is that Treshana started working with the NL Autism Society 6½ years

ago. As assistant manager for the Eastern Region, she is a tireless champion, providing programming on the Burin and Bonavista Peninsulas, reaching west to Glovertown and east to Norman's Cove.

Since March 2016, Treshana has become the face of autism training for first responders in the province. This issue was raised by a firefighter in Come by Chance who had an autistic nephew. Fire Chief Duane Antle who is also president of the NL Association of Fire Services reached out to Treshana, who developed a training program which is continuously delivered in all regions of our province.

I had an opportunity to visit the society's office in Clarenville recently and all I can say is wow. Treshana, you and your Program Coordinator Lisa Lane, truly make a difference to those you serve.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, she has done it again! Rising above the odds, overcoming any challenge that lay before her and shattering world records, Kaetlyn Osmond made Newfoundland and Labrador, and indeed all of Canada, proud as she skated to a silver medal performance at the World Figure Skating Championships in Helsinki.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: Her parents, Jeff and Jackie, were in the arena to watch and were quoted after the win saying they were "ecstatic" – and rightfully so!

Mr. Speaker, we know Kaetlyn's story so well. Having grown up in Marystown to move as a young girl to pursue her skating dreams in Montreal and then Edmonton, where she lives today, she would return from the Sochi Olympics with a silver win only to shortly after suffer a devastating injury. She had to learn to skate all over again. Dedication, discipline and

deep-rooted family support have all led to her roaring comeback.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in saying congratulations Kaetlyn for the superb performance, and thank you Kaetlyn for being the wonderful ambassador that you have become. You were silver on the podium but first in our hearts.

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 take particular delight today in rising to acknowledge a constituent who has changed the face of choral music since accepting a position at MUN's School of Music in 1979.

Besides his immeasurable contribution to generations of students, who in turn became teachers, Dr. Douglas Dunsmore reshaped the Newfoundland choral scene, already rich when he arrived. Doug's tireless energy helped bring that richness to national attention; those he inspired brought our choirs to the world.

Doug was founding artistic co-director of the spectacularly successful Festival 500, and was involved in so many projects, Mr. Speaker, I could talk for hours.

Particularly dear to me is the Philharmonic Choir of the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra, which Doug founded with NSO conductor Peter Gardner. We who have the privilege of performing major oratorio repertoire can attest to the joy of doing so having been directed by someone with Doug Dunsmore's knowledge and enthusiasm.

Doug retired as choir director after the annual December performance of The Messiah, another of his legacies to our choral music scene. We're sad to see him go, but grateful for having worked with him.

I ask the House to join me in thanking Dr. Doug Dunsmore for his dedicated work, particularly for the NSO Philharmonic Choir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize drinking water system operators in this province. Last week, I joined over 300 participants for the annual Clean and Safe Drinking Water Workshop in Gander – everyone from operators, municipal representatives and trade show exhibitors, to national experts in the field.

At the workshop, I was pleased to present the Volunteer Operator of the Year Award to Mr. Calvin Warford of Pleasantview for over 35 years of countless volunteer hours.

The Operator of the Year Award was co-awarded to two individuals from Ramea: Mr. Brian Marsden and Mr. John Skinner for their response to the storm effects on Ramea's drinking water in December.

I also awarded certificates of appreciation to the other 19 nominated individuals for their hard work and dedication.

Water and waste water are a priority for our government, and our department provided \$140 million in water and waste water projects last year in conjunction with the federal government. Approximately \$209 million will be spent this year, and \$580 million over the next three years on municipal projects, including water and waste water systems.

In closing, I would like to thank the many system operators that attended the workshop, as they are at the first line for the delivery of water services. I also thank the Water Resources Management Division for organizing this event. It is very important that operators receive the proper training and support, and this workshop is just one of the many initiatives we offer to meet this goal and to ensure drinking water safety and municipal infrastructure sustainability.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We also recognize the importance of clean, safe drinking water and applaud the drinking water system operators throughout the province.

I want to congratulate Mr. Calvin Warford on receiving Volunteer Operator of the Year. I commend him for his impressive 35 years of volunteer service. I also want to congratulate Mr. Brian Marsden and Mr. John Skinner on sharing the Operator of the Year Award.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to recognize these operators for their hard work and dedication, whether it's through awards, nominations or certificates of appreciation. Clean drinking water is important to all municipalities in this province, and it's important that we see we have so many dedicated individuals who are ensuring safe drinking water for our residents.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm sure the system operators who are participating in these annual workshops are appreciative of the training provided, excellent training but support means more than annual training sessions and capital funding. Municipalities need more resources for ongoing training and technical support if we are ever going to eliminate the many boil orders in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise to recognize the long-awaited, first ever meeting of the Council on Higher Education. This council was created in 2005 through legislation. The council's purpose is to increase collaboration between Memorial University of Newfoundland and the College of the North Atlantic.

Members of the Council on Higher Education include representatives from the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, which I Chair, the presidents and board chairs of both post-secondary institutions, and, most importantly, student leadership.

The inaugural meeting included an overview, Mr. Speaker, of commitments in *The Way Forward*, and members discussed opportunities for current and future collaborative efforts. They identified areas of interest for future partnership to benefit all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, by working in partnership through the Council on Higher Education, we will identify opportunities for improved engagement, sharing of resources and increased collaboration in areas such as research.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, believes that post-secondary education is key to Newfoundland and Labrador's success in a challenging, changing economy. Collaboration through the Council on Higher Education will help provide strong value for our investments.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for an advance copy of his statement. I too would like to recognize the members of the Council on Higher Education, and I wish them well in their mandate. The Council on Higher Education has been a focus of importance for many years with a continuing

goal to line the functions of the institutions for the overall betterment of our student population.

In 2006, the act that established the Council on Higher Education was established. I'm pleased to see the council will be continuing to build on integrated approach which will result in greater opportunities and a brighter future for our youth, especially now when it is needed the most.

I look forward to hearing more about the council and what they will bring forth, and I wish them the best in their task ahead.

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. Indeed, the formation of this council is very good news. It's so important that students are represented on this council because it's for the purpose of helping the students that the council exists. I urge government to work with the council and provide support for more paid internships, a real concern of our post-secondary students, and that these happen within our post-secondary programs to help young people to be more job ready when they graduate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions

Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, the Member for Labrador West has been saying that the government is moving forward with the repeat of a study on the fixed link this fiscal year – the

government has budgeted \$750,000 for the study in the 2016 budget.

I ask the Premier, the minister responsible for Labrador, to tell us what, if any, of the money has been spent so far.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, one of the opportunities that we have, in working with our federal government, is that often what we've seen in the past is that they've been able to step up and leverage some federal money and, therefore, less resources would be required for the province, Mr. Speaker.

So what we are doing now is working with the federal government. They have made an indication that they are willing to participate. Once those contracts are finalized, we'll get on with this study. It's very important to the people in Labrador and, indeed, very important to the people all across Newfoundland and Labrador that we get this study completed. Because it really forms the decisions that we need to make in the future based on evidence, where we need to be with this and costing and so on. And what we would then need for ferry services and, indeed, how long.

Mr. Speaker, any opportunity that we have to leverage federal money to support a provincial initiative, we're going to do that every single time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, my question was how much has been spent so far this year; \$750,000 for a fixed link study in last year's budget. Government also slashed \$860,000 from Labrador-Grenfell health services in the same budget, and some people in Labrador feel that was quite the trade-off for the people of Labrador-Grenfell region.

So I ask the Premier: If he thinks that's a fair trade-off, \$750,000 for the fixed link and

\$860,000 coming off health care for the people in Labrador, is that a good trade-off and how will the federal government support the project that he's talking about? How much money is being spent on this?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed this was not a trade-off. People in Labrador for many, many years have been asking for a decision on where they would be with the fixed link. There's a lot of support for the fixed link, just not for Labrador, as I said, many people look at this as a necessity for all our province. Putting a fixed link in place will actually change the way goods and services are delivered to the province, but it would open up Labrador in making accessibility to services and so on and generate economic activity, Mr. Speaker.

It's quite clear that Members opposite – because I've heard the Members from the Opposition, from the PC Opposition in the past who have said this was a waste of money. What they're saying, Mr. Speaker, it was a waste of money to determine if indeed a fixed link was possible. Therefore, their opinion is that there should be just a ferry there providing that service into perpetuity.

It's not the position that we take. We need to determine once and for all if indeed a fixed link can be done to support Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, a study done in 2004 on a fixed link, when published, determined that it could cost more than \$2 billion in today's dollars.

So I ask the Premier: If you're doing a study and depending on the results of the study, if you go ahead with this, you're looking at a \$2 billion bill – where's the government proposing to get the money to pay for a \$2 billion fixed link?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I guess it seems like the former premier of the province, and now the Leader of the Opposition, it seems to me, he seems to have the answer on what indeed the study would be. I guess the question could have been answered back in 2004. Why did they actually even start the study themselves if the answer was just to do it so you can put it on a shelf and not to anything with it, Mr. Speaker?

What we want to do, there will be a number of options once we get the results back from the fixed link. We will not give up on people in Newfoundland and Labrador and we will definitely not be giving up on Labradorians. It's one of the reasons we made the biggest, single investment in the Trans-Labrador Highway – the single, biggest investment in the Trans-Labrador Highway – and we did that in partnership with the federal government – somebody they could never work with.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I remind the Premier of the great work that was done on the Trans-Labrador Highway in recent years, over the last decade.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: As a matter of fact, the highway was opened under our watch, not under their watch.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, we believe in investments in Labrador; there are no two ways about it. The study has already been done. They're re-doing a 2004 study.

I ask the Premier –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

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

They're touchy over there today.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Will government also calculate the implications on tourism and trade and the potential implications on the link that currently connects the Maritimes to Port aux Basques – the hub of Burgeo – La Poile?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will tell you right now in the preamble to the question, are we touchy over here; we are concerned over here. We are concerned because what we've inherited from the previous administration is someone that completely gave up, gave up on places like the Northern Peninsula, gave up on districts like Burgeo – La Poile. They were addicted to oil. If oil didn't answer the question, they did not go looking for it. We are concerned about rural areas in our province.

Mr. Speaker, a fixed link study needs to be done to determine what is required, number one, in terms of ferry services for Labrador, for the Labrador area. We will continue to make significant infrastructure investments, not only in Labrador but in the Northern Peninsula. We're concerned about rural Newfoundland. They gave up on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's unfortunate the Premier doesn't like to answer the question, so I'll ask him the question again because he got caught up in his own rhetoric over there.

Will the government calculate the implications on tourism and trade and the potential implications on the link that connects the

Maritimes to Port aux Basques, which is the hub of Burgeo – La Poile – I know they're sensitive over that. The question is simple: Will you calculate those implications on a very important part of the province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm certainly happy to stand here and speak as it relates to Marine Atlantic because it's something that the other side desperately was lacking in when they were on this side. In fact, I can say here in this House that when the Member opposite, the Leader of the PC Party, was over here he had zero meetings with Marine Atlantic during his tenure. He had zero meetings with the federal government as it related to Marine Atlantic. So we certainly don't need to worry about what their concerns were about Marine Atlantic because, I can guarantee you, they had none.

What I can say is this side is cognizant of the challenges in Labrador, it's cognizant of the challenges we face from rural Newfoundland and Labrador and it's not something that's meant to be mutually exclusive. We're going to take steps over here to make sure that we benefit everybody in this province, no matter where they live.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I remind all hon. Members I'm hearing a lot of voices, other than the individual that I've recognized to speak. I ask hon. Members to respect the rules of the House and to respect the individual that has been identified to speak.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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

I say to the Member opposite not so, not the case; what he's saying is not correct.

Mr. Speaker, he didn't answer the question either. Will they calculate the implications on his district, his own district – he just had a chance to answer it and he never committed to it. Will they calculate the implications on tourism or on trade? They won't answer the question, Mr. Speaker.

The joint councils of Labrador in their discussions talked about the ferry service, they talked about roads, they talked about jobs and I'll tell you what wasn't the priority for them: the fixed link for Labrador.

So I'll ask the Premier, the minister responsible for Labrador: Why doesn't government address the real issues in Labrador and get to the heart of the matters? Instead of rhetoric, why doesn't he give answers to the people?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, talk about rhetoric. Let's talk about common sense. If the former premier and the Leader of the PC Party ever visited that district, he would know that it is a big concern all around Labrador to get a fixed link study done. Get in touch with people in Labrador, I say to the Members opposite, Mr. Speaker – get in touch with them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Listen, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the impact on tourism and economic development in our province, we see any potential fixed link to have a tremendous impact in a positive sense. They can talk about the negative impacts all they want, because all we've seen based on the previous administration is red anyway. It's been just a sea of red, Mr. Speaker, posting deficits when they've had the highest revenue in the history of our province. We are concerned. We see this opportunity as a positive impact on tourism in our province, Mr. Speaker, and yes, we will consider all impacts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

A great performance by the Premier this afternoon, but he didn't answer the question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the CFIB business barometer indicates that 30 per cent of survey respondents are going to cut jobs in the next three months.

So I ask the Premier: What actions are you taking to address this critical impact on our economy?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

CFIB, we've seen the business barometer, Mr. Speaker. If you notice in the barometer you would see all province's that are dependent really on oil – given the fact that this previous administration made this province dependent on oil when they refused to diversify the economy, refused to invest in areas of economic generation and creating jobs, Mr. Speaker.

What we are doing to create jobs was outlined last week in *The Way Forward: A Vision for Sustainability and Growth* in our province, talking about some 14,000 person years of employment, Mr. Speaker, just the investments and infrastructure alone nearly 5,000.

Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of investments that industry leaders are looking for. We've met with the heavy civil; we've met with the agriculture federation. Mr. Speaker, all of them like the initiatives within *The Way Forward*. It is creating jobs. It's investment in infrastructure that is badly needed in this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

From a high to a low.

Mr. Speaker, the CFIB actually points that taxes and fees as the reason why the economy is the way it is.

Will government reduce business taxes in this budget? Can we expect another lazy budget like people of the province saw last year, or a real plan to get the economy back on track?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the people of this province have suffered through 12 years of lazy government. Mr. Speaker, 12 years of lazy government when there was nothing done to bring investment in parts of this province. Like I said, Mr. Speaker, addicted to oil. They had infrastructure plans on the back of an envelope, nothing concrete, Mr. Speaker. They made decisions based on political evidence. That's what it was done for, Mr. Speaker. It was a popularity contest. They didn't care about running deficits.

Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about the future of our province. That is the reason why we put in place a vision for sustainability and growth in this province. We will continue to make key strategic investments in our province. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it will create jobs and it will diversify this economy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I remind the Premier, that plan has – the Conference Board of Canada says Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province in the country that's going to have a negative GDP growth next year. So that plan is not really working.

Mr. Speaker, the Nalcor AGM announced that oil production in 2016 was four times that which it was in 2015.

I ask the Minister of Finance: How is this going to impact our fiscal situation in the upcoming budget?

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

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

It's certainly a pleasure to get a chance to stand and answer a question from the Member opposite. I would refer him back to the information we released as part of the fall fiscal update when we provided people of the province with visibility into some of the positive things that have happened with regard to oil royalties and oil production. Certainly those things which we've benefited from in the past year will certainly help where we will be when we announce the budget on April 6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Nalcor announced \$55 for their 2017 forecasting.

I ask the minister: Is your government endorsing this number as well?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the forecast that government had in place for oil price is available on the government website. The Member opposite can certainly look at that. We took a great initiative last year to be very transparent around where we are with oil royalties and oil production. There is clearly, publicly disclosed information there as to government's position on the '16-'17.

When the budget is released on April 6, later this week, we'll be able to provide people of the province the forecast numbers we're looking at for the next six years as we work hard to bring the province back to surplus, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm asking on behalf of the people of the province. The Crown Corporation, Nalcor, who obviously controls our natural resources, has indicated that they're projecting a \$55 barrel of oil for 2017.

I'm just asking the Minister of Finance: You and your budget, is that what you're projecting? Is it consistent with Nalcor or is it not? A simple question.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, Nalcor – it is my understanding, the last I had checked – provides their forecast based on a process that they've identified inside Nalcor. For the province, we have undertaken a number of initiatives including, I believe, upwards of 11 different forecasters that we use to build our price, which we will forecast.

We started last year with a revenue risk adjustment to make sure that we were being careful around the revenue that we were projecting, and we've also taken additional initiatives this year to make sure the oil price that we reflect in our budget is based on the most transparent information and the most knowledgeable information that we have, and we'll release that detail on Thursday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on November 30, I asked the Minister of Natural Resources for an update on the extended loan guarantee and at that time an update wasn't available.

I ask the minister today: Can she give us an update on the completion of the extended loan guarantee?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, back in October we were very pleased as the prime minister announced a \$2.9 billion enhancement to the federal loan guarantee. It meant significant advantages to our province in terms of borrowing and certainly strengthened Nalcor, and we were certainly pleased to have the support. Since that, there has been a considerable amount of work done. If you noticed, the announcement was made by the PMO at the time. It's not something that we came out with.

Mr. Speaker, we're anticipating that we can actually even bring further value once we finally get through all the documentation that's required. Mr. Speaker, like we said so many times in the past, we are not about renting rooms and sitting down and making fancy announcements when we don't have the feds at the table, that will include the federal government. We're not going to go there. When it's done it's done, but I tell you what, Mr. Speaker, Nalcor and the people of this province will be better off, will be much better off with the finalization of those agreements.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No answer again.

On November 30 as well, at that time I asked the Minister of Natural Resources if stipulations in the loan guarantee would prevent the sale of Muskrat Falls' assets. At that time she indicated that provision had not been reviewed yet.

So I ask her again today: Section 40-11 Change of Control, will assets of Muskrat Falls be allowed to be sold under the new agreement?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, once again, I'm very happy to respond to this question because right now, as I said so many times in the past, the lineup of potential purchasers for Muskrat Falls is few and far between. But I will say, if there's – Mr. Speaker, what we are doing right now is trying to manage, and we've seen some considerable work that's been done by the new board, by the new CEO, and we've seen this just last week at the AGM.

Mr. Speaker, Nalcor is in a much better spot this year. We've put a considerable amount of work into getting that project back on track, getting it back on schedule as best we can be. We've worked very closely with the indigenous leaders. Mr. Speaker, there have been certainly a number of issues that we've had to deal with working with the Minister of Natural Resources and so on, working with Nalcor.

Mr. Speaker, the project is in a much better place today than it was when we took it over, but there's no lineup of people looking for purchasing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The eastern seaboard – the Premier is saying no one wants electricity. In his own documentation that was released by Nalcor, the new CEO basically said in 2021 to 2040 there'll be \$3.4 billion generated in excess revenue.

I ask the Premier: Is this correct? Does he agree with it or not?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course we look for all opportunities for the sale of recall power, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to Muskrat Falls power, it's very expensive, as we know that. So the sale of recall power to potentially any jurisdiction will be negotiated.

I can assure the Members opposite, there is no one in the northeastern seaboard looking to pay what it would mean for the cost to generate Muskrat power, get it to those jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker. There is no one lining up to pay that amount of money.

We will take every advantage to sell recall power wherever possible; put that back into rate mitigation so we can get affordable, competitive rates for ratepayers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Right now, they are left to burden and shoulder the complete costs of the Muskrat Falls Project.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

After eliminating 24-hour snow clearing, the minister committed to this House that equipment would be available, when needed, after hours. However, during Friday night's snowstorm, equipment was pulled off at 8 p.m.

Can the minister explain why this was the case?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure for me today and I thank the hon. Member opposite for giving me the opportunity to thank the hundreds of men and women that are working our highways in adverse weather conditions to provide safety for the people that are on the roads.

Mr. Speaker, contrary to the Member opposite for Mount Pearl – North and others who put tweets out on Friday night informing the people incorrectly that we were taking plows off at 8 o'clock, we were not. That's the kind of irresponsibility that we're getting from the other side. Totally irresponsible, because we did not take our plows off on Friday night and we provided that service for the people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe there are a lot of Members opposite taking acting classes lately, but they're doing a great job.

AN HON. MEMBER: What?

MR. PETTEN: You heard me.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of what the minister just got up with his antics, the department's own dispatch line said the plows are coming off at 8 p.m. It wasn't over Twitter; it was done from their dispatch line. And that would be my question: What is it: Who got the correct facts?

Your own department are saying 9:30 but your own dispatch line – in their Tweets I should say. Their dispatch line is saying 8. So you got incorrect facts. Maybe you want to explain that, Mr. Minister.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, what I would like to clear up, this is not a laughing matter; this is very serious. If the Members opposite had just an idea of the amount of snow that we've had since last Thursday, including the Avalon Peninsula, including Central – maybe we should go out to Central Newfoundland and have a look and just see.

We are probably in the vicinity of about 100 centimetres of snow since Friday. Our crews are working around the clock to provide safety. If, in fact, the Member opposite called and got an incorrect number – maybe he called the wrong number; I have no idea.

I can assure you that we deployed all of our resources over the weekend. All of our resources were deployed to make sure our highways were safe for the people that were driving. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I drove back yesterday –

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't mind the minister; I do know how to use the phone and make a call. But I never made the call; others did.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. PETTEN: So everyone else is not telling the truth, is that what you're saying?

While doctors, nurses and law enforcement and other Central workers are still required to travel to and from work, government cuts have led to plows being taken off the roads at 8 p.m. during a snow event, leaving many to risk their own lives. Does the government still consider snow clearing to be an essential service?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying the last – I was trying to finish off a statement. We had a tremendous amount of snow and blizzard conditions over the weekend. Yesterday I drove from Central Newfoundland, less than 24 hours after having blizzard conditions, over 50 centimetres of snow, drove on a highway that was completely bare – completely bare.

Mr. Speaker, these are our men and women who are out providing these services. The Member opposite is well aware of the protocol that's in place for emergency situations. He knows quite well all of that because he was actually working in the department as an EA. So he should know all of that.

We will continue to make sure that we deploy our resources to have safety as number one for our residents in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis, for a quick question.

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

Last Thursday, DFO announced a massive 63 per cent cut in shrimp quotas. This is devastating news to the inshore shrimp industry. FFAW is calling for DFO –

MR. SPEAKER: I'd ask the Member to get to his question.

MR. K. PARSONS: FFAW is calling for DFO to reconsider these cuts. Minister, what's your position?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, for a quick response.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. The position of this government, Mr. Speaker, and I guess it's the position of this House because our position stems from the All-Party Committee that we were Members of last year, and we stand by the recommendations of the All-Party Committee.

We look forward to working with DFO in the coming weeks to minimize the impacts to our inshore plant workers and harvesters.

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.

The minister took the words right out of my mouth: the All-Party Committee. So I ask the Premier and the minister: Are they willing to set up the committee again so we can continue having the united front that we had in fighting LIFO?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A two-part question, I'll answer the first part and then I guess the minister will get up and answer the second part. As we just said, Mr. Speaker, it was difficult news that we received last week when it comes to the shrimp quotas and today, again, with the release of crab quotas.

These are very difficult times for harvesters and plant workers and people that have made significant investments into the fishing industry in our province. So we'll be working very closely with all involved. We'll be working very closely with DFO on all this. I know the minister has been in contact; our office we've had some chats this morning about this. So, Mr. Speaker, if it takes an all-party committee to get this right, we will do and consider all the options that we have available to us.

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.

The inshore shrimp sector has supported thousands of onshore processing jobs, as we know, while there was virtually no onshore processing generated by the landings from the offshore shrimp sector.

So I ask the Minister of Fisheries and Lands: Has he given any consideration to requiring offshore shrimp licence holders landing their catch in the province to process a portion of their landings in shrimp plants in the province?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is something that we've had discussions with our offshore companies about. One of the benefits of the CETA agreement is that the 20 per cent tariff on consumer-packed shrimp will not be there any more after CETA is signed.

So it's going to give our offshore companies an opportunity or an advantage that some of the

industrial shrimp that's cooked and peeled now in other countries to avoid tariff can now be looked at being cooked and peeled here in the province and finished to a consumer pack. That's certainly a discussion that we're having with our offshore companies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask the minister, in trying to maintain a united front from this House of Assembly on behalf of the people of the province, if the minister will join us in demanding Ottawa that they make it a condition of licence for offshore licence holders to direct a portion of their landings for processing onshore?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. We have reached out to the companies, and our first approach is to work with the companies to entice them or to get their equipment to cook and peel industrial shrimp on land. There are some more challenges about it because there are jurisdictional issues, Mr. Speaker. Some of the shrimp today is landed in other jurisdictions outside of this province. So we would have to be very balanced in how we looked at that approach.

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.

In the all-party committee we could discuss that approach and how to move forward with it.

Is the minister prepared to call for Shrimp Fishing Area 6 to be deemed inshore only?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think my answer to the first question from the Member for Cape St. Francis was, yes. That was a recommendation that came out of the all-party committee, I believe, two years ago. That was the position of us when we sat on that side of the House, and that's our position today.

Thank you very much, 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.

The minister and the Premier have referred to talks and ongoing conversations.

I ask the minister: Does he have any meetings planned with his federal counterpart to discuss this urgent matter?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The answer to that is, yes. I've reached out to the minister's office. I've been speaking with the minister's office numerous times since last Thursday. We continue to do so, and I hope to speak with the minister in the very near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: A very direct question, then, for the minister, Mr. Speaker: Will the minister ask the federal minister to do nothing less than to reconsider his drastic decision?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we did our presentation as a province or as a department a few weeks to the advisory committee, we asked to have a recommendation – or our request was similar to that of the FFAW, that the cuts that would have to be made this year be balanced over a two-year period. We've reiterated that to the federal minister's office, that we felt these cuts should've been taken more of an average or a balanced approach.

Mr. Speaker, we can assure the harvesters and processors and plant workers in this province that we will be there to support them in any way we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In accordance with the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, it is my pleasure to table the 2017-2019 strategic plans for Nalcor Energy and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

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

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

Pursuant to section 5(2)(b) of the *Supply Act, 2016*, I am tabling one Order in Council relating to usage of the contingency fund for the 2016-

2017 fiscal year as it relates to commissions of inquiry.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Labrador West, the following private Member's resolution:

WHEREAS most gas stations and fast food restaurant drive-throughs across the province have no recycling bins available for travelling motorists; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has the lowest recycling rate in Canada;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House recognizes the importance of increasing recycling in the province and urges government to consider legislation requiring recycling containers be present at fast food restaurant drive-throughs and gas stations.

Thank you.

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

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 63(3), the private Member's resolution just read by the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port shall be the private Member's resolution to be debated this Wednesday.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

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

WHEREAS emergency responders are at great risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, known as PTSD; and

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to enact workers' compensation legislation containing a presumptive clause with respect to PTSD for people employed in various front line emergency response professions, including firefighters, emergency medical service professionals, and police officers not already covered under federal legislation.

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

Mr. Speaker, it's not the first time I've spoken on this very serious matter, and we haven't heard any response from government on it yet, or any indication of giving it some serious consideration. What we do know is post-traumatic stress disorder is common amongst first responders in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, we have a combination of first responders and types. We have first responders who are career paid employees, and we have first responders who are volunteer-based. And, Mr. Speaker, I would go as far as to say all are professionals in the work that they do, have a variety of training, depending on the roles and responsibilities. I can also say that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: – for all of us to say that emergency responders take their jobs very seriously and face difficult and challenging times when never wanting to or never looking to do so but having to do so because of the circumstances that exist from time to time, emergencies, a disaster, chaotic situations and the like that occur in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, currently, under current workers' compensation legislation, a person filing a claim for post-traumatic stress disorder has to identify the event that caused the post-traumatic stress disorder. We know that more so than ever before, that in many times it's impossible for a first responder to identify an event that caused PTSD.

It is better known as time goes on and through practice and through greater understanding of occupational stress injuries, and particularly post-traumatic stress disorder, that quite often it's an accumulation of stressors and exposure to events over a long period of time. Sometimes it could be decades before a post-traumatic stress disorder is diagnosed and understood in an individual first responder, and that person really begins to come to terms with the impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder; therefore, the workers' compensation needs to be reviewed.

Government needs to ensure that actions and steps are being taken so that first responders understand the stressors, the stress that happens when placed in chaotic and stressful situations, understand how they feel and how their bodies will react, and also other ways to prevent illness at a later time. Understanding is one of those, but when a person becomes ill with post-traumatic stress disorder it is incumbent upon legislation to be in line, to help and assist those first responders, not to be an obstacle as it is today. This is about changing legislation for workers' compensation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize the Member for St. John's Centre, I understand the importance of

conducting business while sitting in the House, I ask Members to keep the volume down so that the Speaker can hear the individual presenting the petition.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS government has removed the provincial point-of-sale tax rebate on books, which will raise the tax on books from 5 per cent to 15 per cent; and

WHEREAS an increase in the tax on books will reduce book sales to the detriment of local book stores, publishers and authors, and the amount collected by government must be weighed against the loss in economic activity caused by higher book prices; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest literacy rates in Canada, and the other provinces do not tax books because they recognize the need to encourage reading and literacy; and

WHEREAS this province has many nationally and internationally known storytellers, but we will be the only people in Canada who will have to pay our provincial government a tax to read the books of our own writers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government not to impose a provincial sales tax on books.

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

Mr. Speaker, I've stood in this House a number of times now and read this petition coming from all over the province and I believe that people in the province have seen it has a personal affront, that there's been a provincial tax imposed on books – again, the province with the highest illiteracy rate; consequently, the lowest literacy rate in the country.

Often we've heard in this House government defending this, saying it's not going to affect the sales of books. But our own publishers are telling us – our own local publishers, those who publish the work of our authors, those who take the risk on new authors as well, who publish their work because they deem it so important to publish not only the work of established authors, but to publish the work of a new authors, are saying that they've told government time again that it will affect the sales of books, and they're right.

We're hearing from our local booksellers who aren't multi-national organizations, but local, small businesses who again are passionate about the issue of literacy in this province who are taking the great risks to retail books written by our local authors. Not that those are the risks, but the risks in terms of how difficult it is to survive as a small business in this current economy. They have clearly told us how this imposed tax is a detriment. They said really what it's doing; it's robbing Peter to pay Ball. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this is not a progressive tax; it's a regressive tax in this current economy. This is a matter, and we've seen a number of those, where we're robbing Peter, the people, to pay Ball.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind all hon. Members that it is unparliamentary to refer to another Member of the Legislature by name. You refer to them by district or title.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS Marine Atlantic ferry rates continue to rise, becoming increasingly more cost prohibitive; and

WHEREAS increased rates impact the cost of goods being shipped into our province, as well as those products being exported out by local business; and

WHEREAS tourism is negatively impacted by the ever-increasing, cost-prohibitive means of ground transport into the Island portion of our province;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to open a line of communications to the federal government to begin and advocate on behalf of the residents and businesses of this province, not stopping until the results are realized.

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

Mr. Speaker, this issue has been brought forward to this House on numerous occasions via petitions from me and some others Members of our Official Opposition. It's a very important issue facing us. As we know, it's our link to the mainland under the terms of union, Marine Atlantic.

It's something that's been subsidized by the federal government as per their obligation. These increasing rates are becoming more of the norm in the last number of years. There was a time when those rates were increasing and some Members opposite were the most vocal opponents to those rate increases. But we find now, with this new, renewed relationship with Ottawa, it's harder to find some criticisms of these rate increases.

With this newfound relationship, I think it would be incumbent upon them to use that great relationship to talk about this issue. Instead of they just accepting it and saying thank you very much, and okay the rates are increasing, we will deal with it.

It was deafening. When the rates were increased in previous years, they were very, very vocal, and rightfully so – as we are now. There is disconnect now. Because of the party stripes, it's not cool to be criticizing your federal counterparts at a time like this over increases that affect each and every one of us. Whether

it's your grocery shelves, whether it's an automotive store, whether it's a tourist coming, it affects pretty well right across the province. The cost of transportation to get to the Island, if you're not flying in, coming through North Sydney during the winter and Argentia in the summer, these rates and results effect consumers. They're very important, and it's meaningful to people. It's one of those hidden costs. You see it slowly creep up, but it is additional costs of crossing the North Atlantic, North Sydney.

As a government, every issue bears importance. If it has a negative impact on our economy and our citizens, it is incumbent upon the government of today, regardless who is in Ottawa, to stand up for our rights and be vocal and to lobby to get those rates more in line with people's affordability.

Those rates lately, if anyone has noticed, the increase in those rates is getting to the point where it is becoming very cost prohibitive. I encourage government opposite to use their newfound relationship to do something about these rates.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I know it's outside the Standing Orders; I've tried this a couple of times. The Members opposite stand and present petitions and would like to know government's position. I'm prepared at this time to speak to this if they'll provide me with leave to speak about this. If they are interested in knowing government's position, I'm prepared to stand here in this House and speak to the people of the province and the Member opposite about what government is doing, but I require their leave and I wonder if I have it.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the hon. Member have leave?

MR. A. PARSONS: Well, it looks like no leave.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the government has not implemented curriculum to teach the basic monetary skills needed by our youth; and

WHEREAS the government of our province has the responsibility to act in the best interests of our youth; and

WHEREAS the youth of our province deserve the greatest level of respect and consideration;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to introduce financial education into provincial curriculum to prepare youth for the monetary and financial challenges of life upon entering the workforce.

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

Mr. Speaker, we know, there's no doubt, there are challenges in our education system from every level, but our education system has as one of its key objectives, is preparing our students, upon graduation and as they transition through different levels of our secondary school system, to move into post-secondary or move into a career within the realms of their particular specialty or something that they feel is going to be their contribution to our society, to prepare them for that.

Too often we hear about – one of the largest numbers that's increasing is bankruptcy amongst young people. When they come out in their first job, it's probably the first time that they've had

disposable income from their perspectives, they move into a financial situation where there are enticements to be able to buy vehicles or homes or certain things or specialized things because interest rates are low or there are no down payments. That's all part of the business philosophy, getting people to buy certain products.

Young people not understanding, when they come out, exactly what impact that may have on them financially is a detriment to our whole society; it burdens them with debt. It prevents them from, in some cases, being able to transition to other careers. In some cases, going back to a post-secondary education institution to upgrade or take a different line of a career path that they'd like to do.

It sometimes has a major effect on relationships because of the burden. It prevents them from being able to do certain things from an investment point of view because they're not familiar with it.

So what we're saying is, and there have been discussions, this is not new. My days as a civil servant going back, and we used to have, the Crown agency was then the Youth Advisory Council. Part of the discussions around there, and that goes back to the early '80s, young people had said they need to be prepared for understanding the financial restrictions, the financial challenges but also some of the financial privileges that young people will have in their livelihood.

Part of the issue here becomes we don't emphasize enough of that, and we're not saying take away from some of the other key things in our curriculum. There are a number of courses that are offered within our school system from civics and some of the other things that could build into it, a key component around financial responsibility, financial understanding. The world has changed. Now we do electronic transfers. We're doing purchasing online. People knowing about what interest rates mean, knowing what credit cards are and some of the things that (inaudible).

Mr. Speaker, I'll have an opportunity to speak to that again, but we think this is another thing that could enhance our education system and help

our students be better prepared as they move forward as productive citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call Order 2, third reading of Bill 2.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 2, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 2 be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour?

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: This bill has been now read a third time. It is ordered that Bill 2 do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity

And Administration Act,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 2)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would call Order 4, second reading of Bill 4.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 4, An Act To Amend The Intergovernmental Affairs Act, be now read the second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 4 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Intergovernmental Affairs Act.” (Bill 4)

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

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

I’m happy to stand here today and speak to Bill 4, which is An Act to Amend the Intergovernmental Affairs Act. And as I am want to do when I speak about bills, sometimes I speak about their substance, their purpose and the size of it. In many ways, it’s a very small actual piece of legislation in terms of its size. It only has about a handful of new sections that we’re dealing with here, but in terms of what it’s doing, this is a substantive move being done by our government as it relates to the Intergovernmental Affairs and the department, and now we have the secretariat. So I’m going to go through the Explanatory Note and go through the sections, and then I’ll talk a bit about the purpose behind it.

Basically, this is a bill that would amend the current act, *Intergovernmental Affairs*, “to ensure consistency with the structure of government departments, branches, offices and secretariats.” It’s basically to address a move

that was recently made by our government as it came to the realigning of current departments and divisions and part of the flatter, leaner management that we are doing with our *Way Forward*.

When you look at the act itself, there are a few sections that are basically repealed with substitutions. So what we have here is section 3 is repealed and now the following is substituted: “There shall be a secretariat within Executive Council responsible for intergovernmental affairs.”

Section 4 of the act is repealed, and now it says: “The minister shall direct the administration of the secretariat. (2) In exercising the powers and discharging the duties conferred or imposed on him or her by this Act, the minister shall act under a style of cause that includes reference to intergovernmental affairs.”

Finally, the remaining sections are subsections 5(1) and 5(2), which deals with the LGIC being able to appoint deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers necessary for the proper conduct of the business of the secretariat.

When it comes to the bill itself, Mr. Speaker, it’s very small in size. So again, just talking about some of the structure behind this, the background and reasoning.

The Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat was established in February as part of the previously mentioned realignment of government. Specifically, this new secretariat that is created combines the functions of the former Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat, the Aboriginal Affairs branch of the Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs office, and the trade policy function of the former Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. So you see a little change here that I think is quite interesting and quite necessary as we move forward.

What you see here is a unification of our government’s efforts to build intergovernmental relations nationally and globally with our efforts to advance our relationships with indigenous governments and organizations. It’s something that this government has taken very seriously, and the fact that our Premier handles this

responsibility personally shows just how important this is to him. Again, he works in conjunction with our Cabinet, with our caucus.

We have a number of Members specifically as it relates to Labrador Affairs. So we're very lucky to have strong Labrador representation in this House. If I may provide some foreshadowing, I know some of them will have an opportunity to stand up later during this debate or during the next debate when we talk about Address in Reply to talk about Labrador. I'm certain that is something that Members of the other side will hope to listen to. So perhaps they can establish some connection with Labrador, because according to Question Period today they're certainly lacking in some of that.

As I move forward, we talk about the fact that we have a secretariat established now that has the capacity to consider interactions with other governments. One of the things we're seeing a lot – again, the Member that sits behind me who deals with trade policies certainly sees this a lot – we had the capability to deal with trade policy as we deal with other governments. It's a huge part of the day-to-day work that goes on every day within government and within various departments. When we look at the fact that all provinces and the feds right now are pursuing an internal free trade deal which will reduce trade barriers within Canada, this is something that obviously fits right into that current development, something that we're trying to do.

Also, we deal with the natural resource development opportunities which we know have always existed in Labrador and there's more potential there now than ever. This will speak to this and will move to this, making it easier as we move forward. The fact is we still have our offshore petroleum exploration going on, in Labrador mining, and I know there are other Members that will stand and speak to this today and they'll talk a bit more in detail about this.

I think a very important thing to note here as we move forward is the fact that the responsibility for this secretariat will remain with the Premier. The Premier has taken personal responsibility for this matter. This is someone even back when we were in Opposition and certainly when we've been in government, he has spent a tremendous amount of time in Labrador going up and

meeting and been all over in every nook and cranny of Labrador. He has taken the time to visit. The fact that he has taken this on, in conjunction with our Labrador Members, shows just how important he views it. This relationship, we need to continue it. I think this move here is a positive step as we move forward as it relates to the establishment of the secretariat.

Mr. Speaker, on that note, I will take my seat and look forward to the debate on this bill from the Members opposite, as well as my colleagues on this side, and look forward to having an opportunity to speak in closing and during the committee phase of this piece of legislation.

Thank you so much.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure today to rise to speak to Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Intergovernmental Affairs Act. We'll specifically look at – it's being repealed, the current *Intergovernmental Affairs Act* and the new secretariat within the Executive Council responsible for Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs.

So the intent, my understanding of the legislation, with the new Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat will combine previous functions, some of the Executive Council, as well as some of line departments, some of the functions, in bringing those together. Specifically, Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat, Aboriginal Affairs branch of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs office, trade policy function of the former department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

As the minister indicated in some of his comments in terms of intergovernmental affairs and relations, many of these aspects obviously are directly tied in terms of various governments, various structures, provincially and federally as well, the interaction of various levels of governments.

The other interesting one is the trade policy function taken out of a line department. There are many interactions in regard to the trade function, which I'm somewhat familiar with in my role formerly as Minister of Innovation Business and Rural Development where the trade function was involved in that department.

There's a lot of work done in active files, whether it's internal trade, execution of trade between provincial jurisdictions in regard to bilateral discussions that we've seen with CETA – the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement – in terms of discussions back and forth, especially in areas of provincial jurisdiction and discussions with the federal government; as well as the Trans-Pacific Partnership with their discussions still underway in regard to Canada and pursuing that with trade partners.

So there is a lot of interaction from the provincial level from the line department; as well, NAFTA in some of the discussion we're hearing out of the United States in regard to that Free Trade Agreement and what some of the priorities are of the current, new administration in the United States in looking at that North America Free Trade Agreement and what other changes can be made.

It's very important that this function to trade and other components are tied and connected to operations of line departments and what's happening, because there's interconnection in that regard. In internal trade, one of the things that is often discussed is the transfer of electrical power and energy, and the challenge we've always had in this province with Labrador and going west with that east-west transmission grid. That can be done under various avenues. Under the Constitution, we have a right to not be discriminated against in the transfer of that power east to west. At a federal level, all stripes of government have not given Newfoundland that direction or allowed Newfoundland or forced any provincial jurisdiction to allow us to use that.

Agreements on internal trade – I know the Premier mentioned before when we talked about Muskrat Falls and east to west transfer of power. He talked about the fact that there were discussions going on with Quebec. I think he

referenced internal trade. So that's a means in regard to the trade component of this piece of legislation, how it's now put under intergovernmental affairs, the new piece of legislation. We need to ensure that the ability and the focus in this piece of legislation allows it to interconnect with other line departments and functions of any particular government, any particular time, to ensure the best efforts for Newfoundland and Labrador and public policy is developed.

There are three amendments being made to the act. The first round is to change the name the Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat to include the functions of the former departments – some I've spoke of – to consolidate the secretariat as part of the functions of Executive Council.

The second round of amendments is to allow changes to the title of the minister responsible for the new Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat so that the minister shall act under as style of cause that includes reference to intergovernmental affairs.

The third is related to the change in title of the Secretary to Cabinet for Intergovernmental Affairs – I understand that was not used since 1998 – to deputy minister or assistant deputy minister of Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat.

Now, some of the briefing and some of the notes that were made available in regard to the intention and what the desire is for this piece of legislation to support and what the intent of Bill 4 is, from a government perspective – and as I said earlier, the department changes here are part of – and I think the minister referenced it earlier. The changes, per se, departmental changes, are not new. They were part of some government restructuring that was announced on February 22 of this year. So I would suggest this is catching up in regard to that restructuring that was announced at that time to amend the legislation to fit what the intent of the current administration is in regard to redefining these particular roles and putting them into Executive Council and combining them.

The former Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs office has been reconfigured, I understand, to, from government's perspective, achieve better

goals. The Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat is established by merging Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat with the former Aboriginal Affairs functions of that office.

So all of this is tied back to the February announcement in 2017 and some of that restructuring; and this follows up on that with regard to redefining what that will look like in bringing it into Executive Council.

With this and with any piece of legislation, when we go to Committee there'll be some questions asked with regard to how these new functions work, and are we confident that this is going to allow the important aspects of this legislation and the operations of government from a policy perspective, from a fiscal prudence perspective, from being top of areas of interest in intergovernmental affairs, certainly from a provincial level, from all levels of government right to Ottawa that were on top of things that are in the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

As we go through Committee, we'll certainly look for some answers in regard to in separating out Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, is there staffing issues here and how do we meet the requirements in that regard. Obviously there's a principle-based relationship with Aboriginal people; to be concerned to make sure that the new structure meets the mandate of the office to make sure that we have those relationships we need and we can build collectively with Aboriginal peoples in policy development, execution of items of importance of all levels of government, whether it's a natural resource development, whether it's providing of services and programming, whether it has the ability to meet particular needs at times in particular communities in society. If there are issues that arise, do we have mechanisms through this legislation to meet those, and to make sure we can meet the needs of all people, all our people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Also, looking at the detailed analysis of how these impact indigenous relations and Labrador issues in general, it is very important that we have that ability and protocols and ability through this and nothing is lost through the integration and directing this to Executive

Council, outside of a normal line department of government. That's very important that we have discussions, go through debate of how that will operate and how it will function to make sure things are maximized in the running of government.

Again, things like has the structure been discussed with the Combined Councils of Labrador as well, in terms of the council and what other groups were consulted as well. That's very important. Obviously from a council perspective, very significant player in regard to representing Labrador and what the issues and concerns and that collectively we work together, in all functions of government, all line departments of government, Executive Council and any government of the day through again policy, service delivery and all of those things that we work towards collectively. We need a mechanism to make sure that they can be addressed, first off they are heard and they can be addressed collectively through the structure of government. So we need to make sure is that what's being proposed here allows this to happen, and certainly there is no interruption in what we've achieved in the past and how we can clear the runway for the future to make this happen.

We'd have to look at – based on the announcement in February 2017 in regard to the restructuring, I think there was nearly a dozen people employed in the Aboriginal Affairs division. So what will the staffing division look like in this new model, the new structure, and we ensure that we have those people, human resources, technical folks and all those we need to make sure that we fulfil the functions of what we need to do.

Earlier I mentioned too, it's certainly very important that we look at the whole trade opportunities. Is this restructuring a lesson in any way, the importance of trade opportunities, because it is so important to Newfoundland and Labrador? When we think about our natural resources, it is very much commodity driven.

Forestry has struggled over the past number of years. Traditionally, it has been a huge industry for us. The fishing industry, there continues to be huge opportunities in regard to this structure today and some of the things we've seen with

the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.

I mentioned TPC, NAFTA, all of those, we need to ensure that this piece of legislation – by taking the trade component and the opportunities out of a particular line department, bringing it into Executive Council, will that still have the focus, the expertise to drive the opportunities that are out there in our changing environment, our changing industries and in world trade?

Again, we're huge in regard to commodities and natural resources. Ever since our first days, over 500 years ago when people settled here in Newfoundland and Labrador, trades were a huge component of it. It's important that we are ensured by this piece of legislation that it remains a priority and we can deal with it.

As well, we talked about internal trade and how important that is interprovincially. We have the mechanisms in place to break down barriers between various provincial jurisdictions so we have the free flow of goods and services within Canada. It's good to export outside our national borders but, as well, it's very important that we break down any barriers in regard to internal trade between provinces and territories.

The other question, why has government moved the trade policy functions of the former department, that's what we talked about, to Executive Council? Trade is tied to economic development and tied to the ability to drive the economy and drive new opportunities. As we go through this, it is very important that we make sure this division or the transfer of any of this has no way downgraded our ability to direct trade policy to work bilateral discussions with our federal counterparts in terms of driving activities that are important to us and the long-term, socio-economic effects of the reorganization.

We want to see that as we go through debate on this and make sure all opportunities are seized through this. If you're making this change in restructuring, I assume it's been done to further facilitate the opportunities that are out there but I guess through discussions and through debate on this and in committee we'll see if that is the case.

Again, I'm looking forward to debate on the bill as we go through, Bill 4, to amend the *Intergovernmental Affairs Act* in regard to a new secretariat within Executive Council responsible for intergovernmental and indigenous affairs. Normally, as we look at things like budgets and those sorts of things when we go through the Estimates process here in the House, that's all usually encompassed within Executive Council. So we'll be interested to see how that would work as we move forward from a budget perspective, what's budgeted, what's estimated and how we go through those estimates here in the House.

So all of those are factors and issues that I think Members on this side would like to learn about and understand in regard to this particular piece of legislation. As we go through this afternoon, we'll have debate in second reading and then when we get to committee there may be specific questions that I'm sure the minister and those on the other side can answer as we move forward with debate on Bill 4.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for Ferryland for his enlightened comments and for the Government House Leader for his opening remarks as well.

It's a pleasure to rise today in this hon. House to participate in the debate on introducing An Act to Amend the Intergovernmental Affairs Act.

The *Intergovernmental Affairs Act* gave the former Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat the authority and ability to build relationships with other governments and international entities to advance the province's interests. It also gave the secretariat the authority and ability to advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador bilateral, multilateral, regional and international intergovernmental meetings and conferences to promote government's position on matters of importance to this province.

Mr. Speaker, the current legislation has not been amended since the 1990s and requires updating.

The introduction of a new Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat was established in February as part of a realignment of government. As the Member for Ferryland acknowledged, this really is much to do with catching up with the changes that were made in terms of the legislation that needed to be amended as a result of that.

The new secretariat, the Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat will combine the functions of the former Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat, the Aboriginal Affairs branch at the Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs office and the trade policy function of the former Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development. The creation of this new secretariat unifies our government's efforts to build intergovernmental relations nationally and globally with our efforts to advance our relationships with indigenous governments and organizations.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has made this a priority, obviously taking on those two functions after assuming government in December 2015, responsible for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Affairs. He's made a priority in terms of government to government relationships, whether that be at our federal to provincial levels, interprovincial levels, and certainly with our indigenous governments and organizations.

Today, we see the natural synergies coming together to form this new secretariat which was done in February, and now it's being reflected in the amended legislation. The change also achieved a much needed synergy. We now have a secretariat that has the capacity to consider our interaction with other governments and trade policy at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, legislative changes are necessary to ensure the new Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat is able to successfully fulfil its mandate. So, Mr. Speaker, as has been referenced – and I'll delve into some of the specifics here now. Specifically, we're proposing three amendments in Bill 4. First, we propose changing section 3 of the act so that it will now read: "There shall be a secretariat within Executive council responsible for intergovernmental affairs."

Secondly, we are proposing changing section 4 of the act so that clause 1 will now read: "The minister shall direct the administration of the secretariat." Clause 2 will now read: "In exercising the powers and discharging the duties conferred or imposed on him or her by this Act, the minister shall act under a style of cause that includes reference to intergovernmental affairs. Mr. Speaker, this really takes away the restrictive language that was in the act before and gives some flexibility under the act now with this proposed amendment to section 4 of the act.

Thirdly, we are proposing changing section 5 of the act so that clause 1 will now read: "The Lieutenant-Governor in Council may appoint, to hold office during pleasure, those deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council considers necessary for the proper conduct of the business of the secretariat." Clause 2 will now read: "The deputy minister shall be the deputy head of the secretariat."

So, Mr. Speaker, this really is in line with all other senior executive appointments that would have been made within government by the Lieutenant Governor in Council which, for those watching at home, is a fancy way of saying Cabinet. Those decisions would be made at the Cabinet level. This really is to clarify the language in the act to ensure that it is clear that the deputy minister in that position referred to as deputy minister is also made the deputy head of the secretariat.

Mr. Speaker, in summary of these changes and I just went through them – we have three changes we're proposing. Changes to section 3 of the act; we're proposing changes to section 4 of the act, Madam Speaker; and we're proposing changes to section 5 of the act.

In summary of these proposed amendments, it will change references to a specific Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat because the act was restrictive in its language in designing it so that the Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat, there could be no other changes or references included within that name. Now we can change it to more general references, to intergovernmental affairs, being a part of the secretariat's duties, which reflect the

new secretariat's current name and broader mandate of Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat.

Again, it goes back to the Premier's commitment to ensure that we place very strongly a high value on our government-to-government relationships, as I said before, whether that be at our federal-to-provincial level. Of course it goes without saying the tremendous relationship that we've had with the federal government and we will continue to do that. I would certainly suggest that's in large part due to the Premier taking this on himself and ensuring that those relationships are managed in the best possible way.

There are also other synergies coming into the secretariat through the Indigenous Affairs branch which the Premier sees as a very high priority to ensure that government-to-government relationship, the nation-to-nation building there, and trade policy branch as well, Madam Speaker, which is important. Those are very natural synergies, as the Member for Ferryland indicated, that do exist there.

The proposed amendments, Madam Speaker, will also update the title of the minister responsible for intergovernmental affairs to reflect the secretariat's broader mandate and we will be removing the outdated and unused title of Secretary to Cabinet for Intergovernmental Affairs in favour of using deputy minister.

Madam Speaker, in section 5 of the act right now which we're proposing to change to read: "The Lieutenant-Governor in Council may appoint, to hold office during pleasure, those deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council considers necessary" That said deputy minister under clause 2 would be the deputy head of the secretariat.

Currently in the legislation, the deputy minister of the secretariat is referred to as Secretary to Cabinet for Intergovernmental Affairs, and that's a title that has never been updated in the legislation but has not been used in practice either since the 1990s. The individual style as such, the Secretary to Cabinet for Intergovernmental Affairs has since the 1990s consistently been referred to as the deputy

minister through successive administrations, and this is really going back into the legislation now and ensuring that what we're doing in practice is reflected in law.

Madam Speaker, the federal government and provincial and territorial governments across our country are putting greater priority on having meaningful engagement with indigenous governments and organizations, and this is a priority for us as well. We see that in the establishment of a new annual leader's roundtable with indigenous governments and organizations, which is a commitment within *The Way Forward* vision. Through this roundtable, we want to shape an agenda together and create positive change, because we recognize strong, good relationships with indigenous people are part of building for our future.

I'm very proud, Madam Speaker, to have four colleagues from Labrador sitting in the government caucus –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: – who do a tremendous job, a tremendous job, Madam Speaker, I would suggest representing the people of Labrador and all groups and governments within it. We have the Member for Torngat Mountains, we have the Member for Labrador West, we have the Member for Lake Melville and, of course, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. I'm looking forward to hearing from the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair speak later today about some of the issues that impact her district and certainly the economic viability of Newfoundland and Labrador that came up during Question Period earlier today, and I'm sure she'll enlighten Members of the Opposition on what those potential benefits might be, and that's always important to do, Madam Speaker.

We also see through the changes being made, the establishment of this new Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat which also advances our vision because it is meant to achieve better outcomes, and that is really part of *The Way Forward*. We're committed to ensuring the changes we make are for the better and that they're well-thought-out and put together, and that is certainly reflected in the

changes that were made with the Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat.

Creating this new entity will place our interactions with indigenous governments and organizations within government's intergovernmental affairs function, which properly recognizes the authority and responsibility that indigenous governments and organizations have in representing their respective people.

Madam Speaker, this is good legislation. These are simple amendments. As to the Member for Ferryland said earlier, he acknowledged that much of these synergies now contained within the Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat are tied to each other naturally anyway. Those natural synergies exist.

He also mentioned, as a former minister responsible for trade, that the trade policy functions that were contained within the former Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, now referenced as Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, that those trade policy functions now would be shifted over into the Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat, and that also was a natural synergy, he suggested, and I agree with that.

He also, finally, suggested that the legislation that we are bringing forth today is routine in somewhat of a nature, to clean up what should have been cleaned up some time ago, some of the language in the act, as it concerns the title of the deputy minister, and certainly to remove some of the restrictiveness in the language surrounding the title of the minister, surrounding the title of the department, the secretariat. It's important that we enable that flexibility and bring those natural synergies together. I think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want government to look at itself to see what are the natural ways that we can move things in with each other, where it makes sense.

I will certainly say, Madam Speaker, I believe it to be good legislation. Although these are what appear to be simple amendments, they're important ones, and this is all being done to support this new entity that will do good work on behalf of the province that result in

successful engagements with the federal government.

We've seen now a slew of announcements coming from the federal government. Minister Judy Foote, you would almost think she is an MHA, she is in Newfoundland so often delivering money to the province and it's a wonderful thing. I really have to commend the Premier on taking this role on himself. I think there has been a lot of action that has derived from that, and really strong relationships that he has built with the federal government, with the prime minister, with our federal Cabinet ministers, and certainly our own provincial Cabinet have built those relationships with their counterparts in Ottawa as well.

But it doesn't only include the federal government, Madam Speaker. It will also include interprovincial negotiations, other provincial governments. The Member for Ferryland also referenced the Agreement on Internal Trade, and that is very important as well.

We also see a number of dealings with foreign governments as it comes to the trade policy function, and perhaps even I would argue most importantly, our relationship with indigenous governments and organizations, and that's extremely important as we look toward building effective and strong relationships with indigenous governments and organizations.

So I certainly look forward to what comes out of the debate today, Madam Speaker. I think, as I've said now, these are somewhat routine matters to be put before the House of Assembly in terms of cleaning up this legislation, as I've said, to remove the restrictiveness of the language as it concerns the name of the secretariat when it comes to the removing the restrictiveness surrounding the language concerning the style and title of the minister. But also, removing the formal title of the deputy minister and reflecting in law what is done in practice now since the 1990s.

Before I take my seat, Madam Speaker, I also want to take a moment, certainly, on behalf of everyone, including the Premier, to say a thank you to the staff at the Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat. They work very

hard. They're not large in numbers, but they work very hard. They have a number of balls in the air at any given time, and these are very professional, consummate professionals who take their jobs very seriously, who are superb in guiding government in its relationships with the federal government, the interprovincial relationships that we have, our relationships with foreign governments, and indeed, with indigenous governments and organizations.

It's extremely important that we all recognize the strong work that the staff and public servants within this secretariat do. I can tell you in my role as parliamentary assistant to the Premier I have interaction with them, and I never stop being amazed by their work, their aptitude, and certainly their skill and knowledge in terms of what they bring to the table for government. So I want to say thank you to them for their continued work on behalf of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I thank Members thus far who have contributed to the debate, and I look forward to hearing the others.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am very happy to stand and to speak to Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Intergovernmental Affairs Act. I also would like to thank all those from intergovernmental affairs who provided the briefing to my colleagues here on this particular act.

I have some concerns, Madam Speaker, particularly about this bill and the concerns that I have specifically revolve around two issues; one, the consolidation and concentration of power within the Premier's office, and we see this as a growing trend; and secondly, I have been in touch, our office has been in touch with a number of indigenous governments and groups who have not had any discussion whatsoever with government about this particular bill.

What I find so interesting is that the House Leader, the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, in his introduction of this particular bill, he said that this is a little bit about the flatter, leaner

government. I'd like to say flatter, meaner government. Also he says that the responsibility for this secretariat – but it's a secretariat with a small s, not a big s, and that will have some bearing and we'll talk a little bit about that, Madam Speaker – will remain with the Premier. He said specifically the Premier has taken the time to visit the indigenous communities, particularly in Labrador, and it shows that he is committed.

I'd like to say, Madam Speaker, that it's quite the opposite. This does establish a way of working with indigenous communities and nations here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The indigenous communities that I've been able to contact so far have not been notified about this act at all, have not been consulted, have not had any conversations whatsoever with this government who says that this is about creating a better way of governance and a better way of relationships with indigenous communities.

I believe that is extremely problematic. So it indicates that in fact this is not about better relationships, and we are waiting to be able to hear from more indigenous communities and indigenous governments in order to see really what they feel about these particular moves.

Although it is a small bill as said by the Government House Leader, the Member for Burgeo – La Poile, it is substantive, not in the number of words that we are dealing with today, but in terms of the changes that it does promise.

The bill makes amendments to the *Intergovernmental Affairs Act* to restructure the role of intergovernmental affairs in government. The reason for the bill is that intergovernmental affairs connects with other provinces, the federal government and governments in international entities to advance the province's interests. It also advocates for Newfoundland and Labrador at bilateral, multi-lateral, regional and international intergovernmental meetings and conferences to promote government's positions on matters of importance to this province.

So it was on February 22 that government announced it was restructuring the old secretariat, combining the former Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat with the

Aboriginal Affairs branch of the former – there are a lot of formers happening here, Madam Speaker – Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs office and the trade policy aspects of the former Department of Business, Tourism, Culture, and Rural Development into the new Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat and the office of Labrador Affairs to better achieve its goals.

Now the concerns again, Madam Speaker, is that this is a further consolidation and concentration of power in the Premier's office. I would like to point out no matter the economic situation of this province, no matter the government's approach to a flatter, meaner governance, to consolidate power at this time is the antithesis of what should be happening.

Again, I'm amazed, absolutely amazed that indigenous communities, indigenous governments have not had a discussion; have not been approached by government; have not even been informed by government that this is happening. This is about the relationship – and as the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue said: This will advance our relationships with indigenous governments and it will bring a stronger relationship with indigenous governments.

The indigenous governments have not been consulted; have not had a conversation about this. They did not even know that this was on the table. That is not how you improve relationships. As a matter of fact, it's the antithesis of how you improve relationships.

The Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat has been established by merging the Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat with the former Aboriginal Affairs functions of the office. The move unifies the provincial government's efforts to build intergovernmental relations, with efforts to advance relationships with indigenous governments and organizations – again, without any conversation, consultation, dialogue with indigenous governments.

A separate office of Labrador Affairs has been created to help address unique issues and advance social and economic development in the region. The responsibilities associated with both of these offices remain with the Premier, which

in and of itself is problematic. Again, this is a further concentration and consolidation of power in an office that has already been consolidating and concentrating its power.

Diminishing our democracy, diminishing our way of doing governance, I don't think that's what the people of the province want. We have a House with 40 representatives elected to govern and to further consolidate power into Executive Council and to the Premier is not the way we should be going.

So it appears – and I believe it not only appears, that in fact it is to both centralize more power under the auspices of the Executive Council and the Premier's office, which is a troubling trend, as well as appearing to bury the issue of Aboriginal Affairs, which for much of the last 20 years has been a department in its own right. So when we see the amendments to this bill, where we see a secretariat that is outside of Executive Council but still accountable to Executive Council, to moving it right in Executive Council, we see the move from the capital S to a small s. That is indicative, absolutely indicative of what's happening with this bill.

When we look at, Madam Speaker, this amendment reflects a growing trend in western style democracies. In Canada, we're talking about the consolidation of power and the concentration of power into Executive Council and away from departmental responsibilities. In Canada, we first saw this move under Pierre Trudeau Sr., Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. Prime Ministers Chretien and Harper were famous for trying to control every aspect of the federal government from their offices. We're seeing that more and more.

This phenomenon is called the 'presidentialization' of parliament, and the trends towards centralizing executive power in one office, the Americanization of Canadian politics, which is not the way parliamentary democracy is supposed to work, and we are seeing this. We're seeing how it hasn't worked. In fact, Madam Speaker, this is a regressive step. This is not a progressive step. If it's based purely on economics it's a regressive step. I believe it's not based solely on economics but that movement to centralization of power.

This province has had a long history of power being centralized in the hands of the executive, especially the Premier. Premier Joseph Smallwood was well known for attempting to run government as his own personal fiefdom. Ministers under his government had little or no true power, and this became worse as his administration aged.

Premier Danny Williams exerted a great deal of control from his office. So it's not just the other side of the House, Madam Speaker. It's also the current Official Opposition, when they were in power also started the trend of centralization and consolidation of power.

Now, *The Telegram* columnist Russell Wangersky wrote: Williams was so involved in the daily working of his government that a feeling grew over the years, if you really wanted an issue dealt with by the government as a whole you had to garner Williams' personal interests first.

Williams was criticized as being a one-man show, a controlling leader with his hands on everything. Now, the Premier was traditionally considered first among equals and her or his Cabinet being those elected officials who the aid of their caucus ran government. Now what we see is that we have specific roles once again removed from that and into the hands of the Premier.

Again, I would like to stress, although government is saying, both the Government House Leader and the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue, that this is about improving relationships, improving relations and better governance with Aboriginal government, indigenous government in Newfoundland and Labrador and indigenous groups, they have not been consulted on this as far as we know. We have been speaking with some; they know nothing of this bill. That's not how you develop better relations.

So again, looking at this trend of consolidation of power, this trend has disappeared as election campaigns and policy announcements tend to focus on the leader's performance. This bill here today continues this disturbing trend. We see more centralization of power in Executive Council with the virtual disappearance of

Aboriginal Affairs into a new conglomerate of functions now referred to as the Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs secretariat, with a small s. Just one of the host of functions lumped into Executive Council.

I ask the Premier, why do this when it diminishes the importance of Aboriginal Affairs, Indigenous Affairs at a time when it could not be more important? It diminishes the role of his backbenchers as well, who also have an important role to play in governing. This bill does not offer anything new that is good. Is it seen by government simply as streamlining because of their flatter, leaner approach, or is it based on a deliberate, an absolute deliberate consolidation of power? And if so, I believe that in fact this does not enhance relationships with indigenous governments and indigenous groups within Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would hope that the right thing for this government to do is to halt this legislation at this point and to have the consultation and discussions with Aboriginal governments and Aboriginal groups before this bill goes any further. That's what would improve relations with Aboriginal indigenous groups and governments. Again, at a time when it is so needed because of what we see in areas of land claims, in areas of large-scale developments, and how it affects indigenous governments and groups in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Intergovernmental Affairs Act.

As the House Leader in his comments earlier, Madam Speaker, talked about the Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariat being established in February, and once there's a change in structure within departments, it takes some amendments to the

legislation. I think this is just more a matter of housekeeping, but I do have a few comments.

I listened to the Member for St. John's Centre talking about how this is not a good thing, but I am indigenous, Madam Speaker. I am an Inuk from Nunatsiavut. I'm a beneficiary to the Nunatsiavut government, and I talk about things that are relative to government legislation and I spent a fair bit of time travelling around in my district by snowmobile, talking to different people. When I asked about the amendments to this legislation, to me, when you put intergovernmental in with indigenous, I think it goes hand in hand.

I'd just like to talk a little bit about it, Madam Speaker. When the negotiations were ongoing for self-government with the Nunatsiavut Government, the former Labrador Inuit Association, there were three levels of negotiation, two levels of government and an Aboriginal entity that went on to become self-government, which is another level of government. There were three levels of government.

This legislation, when you look at intergovernmental affairs, talks about the relationship with the Government of Canada, it talks about trade agreements, it talks about relations with other provinces within our country, Government of Quebec, Government of Alberta, Government of Prince Edward Island, Government of Nova Scotia. It talks about the Government of Nunatsiavut.

Not only that, Madam Speaker, within Labrador now we have three different Aboriginal entities that are working towards a common goal, at three different levels of negotiation. The first one is the Nunatsiavut Government which has negotiated a Land Claims Agreement, and that Land Claims Agreement was negotiated with the provincial government and the federal government. Now, if that's not a definition of intergovernmental affairs, then we don't have one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: We also have the Innu Nation that is negotiating the New Dawn Agreement. They have an agreement-in-

principle, so now they're negotiating with two levels of government, which is intergovernmental affairs, towards a final agreement. We also have the NunatuKavut on the South Coast that is still negotiating, getting to a framework agreement.

So all these negotiations involve three levels of government, Madam Speaker, and I'd like to go back and look at the bill itself, An Act to Amend the Intergovernmental Affairs Act. I think it's a big plus to include indigenous affairs within the intergovernmental affairs department because it gives us a hand-in-hand framework agreement. It sets the tone for intergovernmental affairs.

We can be very vague and we can say that intergovernmental affairs mean Newfoundland and Labrador and Ottawa; or in terms of agreements with the Atlantic provinces, we could be negotiating with the Government of Nova Scotia – and, in fact, in some degree, we are. We have to look a little bit further than that. We now have another government within our province and that is the Nunatsiavut Government. I think intergovernmental relations come forward to embrace that.

Not only that, I think to include indigenous with intergovernmental will help the framework agreement for New Dawn and down the road, it could very well play a big role in negotiations with the NunatuKavut community, Madam Speaker.

So I think this is a good piece of legislation. As the hon. House Leader said, it's a certain part housekeeping but it do extend our ability to work with the indigenous people of our province, which includes me, as well as dealing with other government agencies. We're all linked hand in hand.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will take my place and I urge all hon. Members to come forward in their support of this because it gives us, as government to government, a way forward with the indigenous people in our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I am happy to stand now and close debate on this particular bill. I welcome and appreciate the comments from my colleagues along the way, as well as the commentary from my colleagues on this side of the House. I look forward to being able to stand up during the Committee phase and answer any questions that may arise.

Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 4, An Act To Amend –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MADAM SPEAKER: Oh, my apologies.

The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker (inaudible).

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, we're just moving through the next reading before we go into Committee.

The motion that Bill 4, An Act To Amend The Intergovernmental Affairs Act be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MADAM SPEAKER: This bill has now been a second time.

When shall this bill be referred to Committee of the Whole?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Intergovernmental Affairs Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 4)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 4.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 4, An Act To Amend The Intergovernmental Affairs Act.

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

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

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

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

I would ask the minister if, in fact, the Innu Nation was consulted on the consolidation of this secretariat.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I would say that it's common practice for governments – certainly this current one and governments previously – to not consult on structural changes made, especially ones that are made on an administrative basis. What I can say, after talking to the Premier and staff, is that many of the indigenous groups that the Premier's office deals with are very happy to deal directly with the Premier's office since he assumed responsibility for indigenous affairs, and that's the commentary that we seem to be getting.

Thank you.

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

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

I, too, acknowledge the importance of being able to address government to government, nation to nation, and that that is a step forward for the indigenous government and groups in Newfoundland and Labrador, but perhaps not so much in this manner.

So I would ask: Was there any discussion or conversations at all with Nunatsiavut Government over this particular move?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Hopefully, this answer will answer the rest of the questions because I believe the Member opposite will go down through the groups. There was no consultation

because this was an administrative change. It's administrative in nature. There's certainly no change to engagement, absolutely.

So I can put out the answer that there would not have been consultation on this particular structural move because it's seen as administrative in nature. In many ways, it's status quo in terms of how the engagement has happened in the last 15 months.

Thank you.

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

MS. ROGERS: So, Mr. Chair, I would ask that if it's status quo and no change at all in engagement – we see that it's a very different move from having a secretariat outside of Executive Council that yet is accountable and answerable to Executive Council, to one that is totally moved within Executive Council. How would that operate differently? I would be interested. I would imagine the move was made because it would operate differently.

For instance, will there be any budget attached to this; and, if so, how will that be identified and what would be the staffing structure?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, thank you.

The first thing I'll correct is that this was actually not outside of Executive Council. It's always been inside. I would say even if it was outside certainly the Premier in this case, who is responsible, is always answerable to the people that they deal with, answerable to the people of the province.

So again, I think this was a case of realignment. There's certainly a federal move towards greater engagement with our Aboriginal populations, our indigenous groups. We see that here as well. We throw in the trade policy as well, that seems to be an increased – so this really is an alignment here that's going on.

My understanding is that this is structural. There will be no change, per se, to how things have

been happening. In a lot of cases when you talk about deputy ministers, I think there's a change in name. One of the parts of the legislation is that it's gone from being secretary responsible to Cabinet to deputy minister. So there's a little change there, but it's not a change in function or practice. That's my understanding. Certainly, there is no change in the engagement part or the accountability side.

Thank you.

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

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

I appreciate the answers from the Government House Leader. I guess when we look at relationships, they are often about engagement and dialogue and discussion. I hear when the Government House Leader says that this is an administrative move that there wouldn't be consultation, but I find it interesting that when we have contacted some of the indigenous governments, they were surprised by this and wondered, and said we know nothing about it.

I would ask again if one of the goals of this is to improve the relationship with indigenous governments and groups, why there was no discussion at all. I can appreciate that it's not consultation in that it's administrative. But is there a rationale for not having any dialogue whatsoever or notification whatsoever to indigenous governments and groups in the province?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: First thing I want to say, I guess if I get an opportunity, is that in terms of engagement let's remember that the Premier just addressed these groups in February at the Combined Councils in Labrador, and actually I think there's a significant roundtable coming up very shortly. So the minister responsible who is the Premier certainly has an extended amount of engagement here.

The second part, I believe this change has been in place now for over a month. There have

actually been no complaints – none. In fact, the commentary regularly is that the groups are very happy that the person they deal with is the Premier. So they regularly express their happiness with this.

If there are complaints about this, I would suggest that they deal with the minister responsible who is the Premier who will certainly be happy to hear them, but I can say that there have been literally, absolutely, no complaints on this change because there's been no change to engagement – none. There's been no change to how they talk to each other, how they've interacted, how they've communicated.

All I can say to anybody that is watching is that this truly is an administrative change. You don't normally consult nor has been the practice, I think, of any government that I'm aware of previously when it comes to an administrative change of this nature, which would have no effect on the big issues that we are dealing with in these groups when they meet. There's been no change. There's been no complaint. So hopefully, that will continue on.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wonder if the minister could just give some background in the transfer of the trade component into the secretariat. The expertise and the general setup of the trade division certainly play important work, and has for the province. Is that just taken now and incorporated into the new secretariat?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

CHAIR: Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 and 3.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 and 3 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 3 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Intergovernmental Affairs Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I moved, Mr. Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 4.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 4.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The hon. the Deputy Chair of Committees.

MR. WARR: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 4 carried without amendment.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report the bill carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MADAM SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move further on the Order Paper to Motion 2. I would move, seconded by the Minister for Natural Resources, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In the Statute Law, Bill 5, and I further move that the said bill be now the first time.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General shall have leave to introduce a bill, Bill 5, An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law, 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.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General to introduce a bill, "An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law," carried. (Bill 5)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law. (Bill 5)

MADAM SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 5 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 1, Address in Reply.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Minister for Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

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

It's a wonderful opportunity and a privilege to be able to stand in Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. I note what a fantastic address the Lieutenant Governor gave us, to the province, and to Members of this Legislature. I appreciate the fact that he is always, His Honour – their Honours are always so anxious and accommodating to appear before us. The content of the Speech from the Throne as well did us a great honour, Madam Speaker. It reflected some of the priorities that not only are within the government itself but, most importantly, reflect the priorities of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would be remiss if I did not recount and suggest as well that those priorities are reflected within the people of Corner Brook, the historic and incredible District of Corner Brook. Before I speak of those elements of the Speech from the Throne, which I think will be of great benefit to those who I so proudly represent, I would also like to reflect on some of the advantages and some of the opportunities that are available to us through a great working relationship with the federal government.

We just discussed a little while ago some of the changes to intergovernmental affairs. Well, Madam Speaker, as I reflect within my own Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour in just a very, very short while the relationship with the federal government has been able to advance some significant priorities that have been dear to me and to the government. For example, we have been able to negotiate for the first time a Canada-

Newfoundland and Labrador Immigration Agreement.

This, of course, becomes the foundation to our future collaboration and partnership with the federal government, addressing some of the needs of immigration and being able to allow us the opportunity to expand our offerings. For example, as noted in not only *The Way Forward* but emphasized within the speech, we'll be looking at an entrepreneurial immigrant investor program, as well as an investor immigration program and a graduate student entrepreneur program.

We just recently, not too long ago, signed the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador agreement on foreign credential recognition, which of course is very, very important. So often have we heard the stories of those who come to us and come to our shores who have skills in various professions and because their credentials cannot be recognized or not easily recognized, they end up working in occupations and circumstances which did not fully recognize the skill sets that they bring to us. We're working hard and we should have further information very shortly about some of the work that we're doing out of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Foreign Qualification Recognition Agreement.

We just came forward with an action plan on immigration, Madam Speaker, and this will be of great benefit to our province because it signals a change in direction. Instead of it just simply being a document exclusively directed at the government itself, it recognizes that its employers in the province will have one of the key roles, the key role, to play in attracting new citizens to Newfoundland and Labrador and to Canada through our provincial nominee program.

So I want to highlight those but now, if I can, I'd like to address some of the more local issues to the people of Corner Brook, the great District of Corner Brook, that our government has prioritized. I think my colleague, the Member for Humber – Bay of Islands, would also recognize some of the great work that's already been done on the long-term care project and the hospital. We're indeed recognized within our strategic priority for infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, I don't think it has to be yelled too loudly for everyone in this Chamber to recognize that this was a project that was announced in 2007, incurred next to no advancement over the course of a decade. It took our government, upon obtaining office and being elected, we brought the project over the finish line and allowed it to be in a state, in a position, where we could move forward. And what an innovation we did bring with the pilot project, with a 3P project, that delivered health care by public sector workers.

A very important point to emphasize that while we sought innovation on the financing and, in fact, innovation on the financing of the building, we provided not only security and the costs of the build itself and the construction, but we'll have certainty for 30 years as to its operational costs.

That, quite frankly, is one of the real genius of the model that's provided here, but the true genius as well. We're leveraging the private sector to help us and enable us to deliver health care in the form of our capital asset, but when it comes to the delivery of health care and the ancillary services in and around the hospital that will be done by the public.

That's a key difference. Not only the previous PC government were they unable – the former PC government was unable to bring these two projects over the finish line, to be able to get it to a position where decisions could be made and it could be brought to tender and brought to advance to an actual true construction date, but their model, of course, was for private sector delivery of health care, which was quite frankly not an acceptable point to the people that I represent, nor should it have been to the government of the day at that point in time. They did not heed that message, and of course they are where they are today.

Madam Speaker, one of the things also, in addition to, when you think about it, this government was able to deliver on a multi, multi-million-dollar initiative to provide better access, better quality health care to the West Coast. I also would like to emphasize and repeat on behalf of my colleagues that additional projects are pending for Central Newfoundland and for the East Coast of the province.

There are important projects that are currently underway that, again, because they were left with an unsettled and no clear finish line, projects in Gander and Grand Falls, and as well as in St. John's, these innovations will be very, very important. I want to say how appreciative we are to our colleagues for advancing this to the point where we'll be in a position soon to be able to speak further to that.

In Corner Brook as well, Madam Speaker, Corner Brook is noted – it was established some years ago to be the headquarters for agriculture and for forestry. I think anyone in this province would see the common-sense logic to establishing both the West Coast outside of downtown, St. John's to be the headquarters of forestry activities, and outside of downtown, St. John's to be the headquarters for agricultural activities.

Well, there was a decision that was taken as well to put the headquarters function of the lands offices on the West Coast to Corner Brook. That creates a certain amount of synergy; there's a great common sense to that. When you have the agricultural assistant deputy minister who's responsible for some of those key departments, a key component to agricultural growth, a key component to forest management, and the key component to a number of different initiatives, especially dealing with our renewable natural resources, having the lands offices in Corner Brook just simply makes sense.

It has not been well received by Members of the Opposition. Certainly, they can defend their positions on the West Coast at a future date. I wish them all the best of luck in that, but what has been extremely well received is the notion that strategic decisions, change is inevitable, change is an important component of progress. The Opposition parties have decided that change is not warranted, that status quo should prevail, that it would be totally acceptable to have the headquarters functions of the lands offices – and they would argue, probably, that the headquarters of agricultural and forestry activity should be in downtown, St. John's. Again, Madam Speaker, I'll leave them to argue that point to the good people of the West Coast of Corner Brook at a future date, if they so choose.

Now, with that said, we're advancing with an agricultural program at Sir Wilfred Grenfell campus. When you look at what's being developed to advance our agricultural sector, it is quite significant. This move, this decision, by the government to move the lands office was of critical importance to that.

We already have five graduate students involved in agricultural research on the West Coast through what's now an emerging growing field in boreal agricultural cultural activities. Madam Speaker, it's going to be a great, great boost when we look at our negotiations with the federal government, our discussions with the federal government, on the Growing Forward on agricultural agreements. Having the resources to be able to put that in play is going to be exceptionally beneficial to us all.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker, the College of the North Atlantic in Corner Brook – we are planning and preparing for many, many campuses throughout the province. The Corner Brook campus has been designated as a centre for energy studies. This is quite an achievement.

The centre for energy studies, in particular for thermal energy and alternative energy sources, this is going to be a major centre of excellence, which will guide the progress from an academic point of view and from the skills training capacity for the future of energy in our province. Key components will, of course, be research in activities in transmission technologies, in solar and wind energy, and thermal studies.

The College of the North Atlantic in Corner Brook is currently the operative centre for power engineering and we're expanding that to a third-class ticket as well, much to the delight of those involved. They've received already their fourth-class ticket and this is quite an achievement and very well received.

The centre for energy studies, I think, is a great, great initiative that will lead to economic benefits in the energy sector to the entire province, and notes the fact that when you have as some of the key components of our natural resources, our renewable resources, indeed being in other areas of the province, scattered all over the province, having it connected to the College of the North Atlantic means that this is not an

institution, this is not an initiative directed solely at Corner Brook or the West Coast; the footprint, the strategic locations of the College of the North Atlantic throughout all of Newfoundland and Labrador means that this institution has the reach to be able to deliver to the entire province. That is true of all the centres of excellence that we anticipate that we're building for the College of the North Atlantic, using the aspect of a campus being a regional hub, located in strategic locations, but having access and the capacity to be able to reach to every sector, every corner of the province, is a great news story.

It's this government, Madam Speaker, that really realized that potential. So I'm looking forward to developing the opportunities at the College of the North Atlantic, but also developing particular initiatives such as the development and support for our entrepreneurial community.

Newfoundland and Labrador is blessed with some fantastic entrepreneurs. Some of the leading stars of our top entrepreneurs, our top corporate sector across the entire country, of course, many of whom have had their roots in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are blessed with a strong and vibrant entrepreneurial community. What we are not necessary as blessed with, as we need to be, are supports for our entrepreneurial community.

We are changing that. One of the ways that we're doing it is reaching out to our post-secondary institutions, such as Memorial University of Newfoundland and the College of the North Atlantic province wide; again, using that model, using the existence of a top-class, world-class university that we have in Memorial University of Newfoundland, having a public college system which we are now creating, we are encouraging it to be a top-class institution. It's incredibly powerful in its own right, but still not functioning to its full potential. We are changing that. We are bringing the College of the North Atlantic to be able to function to its full potential, and part of that is the delivery of assisting us and assisting the province in the delivery of entrepreneurial supports.

Just this past weekend, I sat with a group of entrepreneurs for an entire weekend. It's an initiative called Startup Weekend. It's hosted by the College of the North Atlantic at Grenfell

College and our joint facility; it's called the Navigate Entrepreneurship Centre. What an incredible opportunity that was for entrepreneurs to come together, not only with leaders in the academic community but leaders from the Angel Investment community.

We were delighted to have Mr. Bob Williamson from the Jameson Group who was there participating in the start-up exercise. Of course, Mr. Williamson heads an Angel Investment firm but a keen, keen promoter in start-ups. In his own capacity as a facilitator and mentor, was a keen facilitator for the Pitch 101 exercises that I attended not so long ago, but that's what we're doing, Madam Speaker.

We're building up a core of business, a core of activities which were not previously part of our college system or necessarily strong within our post-secondary education environment. That is changing, and we're supporting our entrepreneurs like never before, but we have more work to do. Stay tuned for that work to be expressed in the next little while, Madam Speaker.

With that said, there are some great important initiatives on the social sector as well. We have a facility in Corner Brook known as Willow House, otherwise more commonly known or more often known as the Transition House. That's been a facility which has been neglected; neglected terribly so for well over a decade. This government, Madam Speaker, is changing that. We're working with the federal government.

My colleague, the Minister and Member for Humber – Bay of Islands, is a key component of that initiative. There's a big investment coming to the Transition House or Willow House in Corner Brook. That I think is worth noting because we see that not only do we have to advance ourselves economically, but the benefit of that.

By creating that stability, by creating that framework for stability and growth, economically we also create a much stronger social safety net. That's why this has been such a difficult time for our government, for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, because after over a decade, for literally 13 years, 13 unlucky years, we had a government which,

quite frankly, did not care about the quality of the public purse. It simply spent; it simply spent un-strategically. It simply spent for the sake of spending and put us in a position where, yes, they will be able to say: well, we did this and we did that, and don't you agree that this particular project is worthwhile? Are you knocking this particular project?

Well, I tell you, Mr. Speaker, what's more valuable than any individual project is an environment where it can be sustained, where it can be held that we have confidence, where we have structure to not only our economic growth but our social growth as well. That is the jeopardy. That is the jeopardy that the PC government put us into. They can rise to their feet and say, oh, they're playing the blame game again. They're doing this or they're doing that, or they don't like the project that we did back in 2009. They're speaking ill or they're speaking negatively of the project that they wouldn't have done that project in 2011.

No, Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. Governments outlast us. We are temporary custodians in this Legislature to the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We are temporary occupants. Each and every one of us, if we understand our role, we have a responsibility to be larger and to be more broad thinking and to be more clearly thinking than just simply the moment.

What this government has done; what our government has done is examine and understand the situation that we faced when we entered office on December 14, 2015. We understood then, very clearly, exactly what the level of jeopardy this province had been placed in and how uncertain our social fabric had been placed in, because now we are in a situation where we were spending, as of that date, we were spending \$2.8 billion more than what we were taking in.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. BYRNE: Two-point-eight billion dollars annually more than what we were able to obtain in revenue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, everyone in this Legislature, everyone in this province, everyone understands that when you're spending that kind of a

magnitude beyond your means, it is only a short question of time before someone starts calling and you are no longer in a position where you decide your own fate and your own future. Someone else will be deciding it for you.

We took a very deliberate position. It will be us, it will be the province, it will be the people of Newfoundland and Labrador –

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): Order, please!

MR. BYRNE: – that retains, commands and controls its own destiny.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BYRNE: And the first order of business is to do exactly that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I remind the hon. minister that his speaking time has expired.

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It's an honour to rise today to in Address in Reply. For those that are watching today, we are following through on the incredible discourse and great speech that the Lieutenant Governor gave, where he in detail, thoroughly and in a detailed way laid out the plan of this government.

Mr. Speaker, he emphasized a lot of the hope, a lot of the opportunity that lies in this province. I thought it was very, very important that he took the time that he did. It was a lengthy speech. It was I think an hour and 20 minutes, where he really laid out – not only at the beginning of the speech where he talked about all the incredible things that are happening in our great province, and he really laid out a – congratulations again to Team Gushue, of course. They're playing this week in the Worlds. I'm very happy to see that.

He talked about some of those great successes we're having in the province today in terms of

the strength of some of our great athletes. We had a speech a little earlier today where a Member rose on his feet to recognize the silver medal that was won over the weekend in figure skating. We know of the great things that have happened at Memorial University's curling team and the incredible success of our athletes in the Special Olympics in the last little period of time.

So he laid those out, Mr. Speaker, and I thought it was important that he start to lay the fabric of the success, tenacity, strength of our people. Then he started to talk about – he relayed that strength, that tenacity, the good will of our people, the strength of our people and turning it into some of the opportunities that lie before us.

Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the PC Party, the Leader of the Official Opposition rose to his feet, he started to talk about the fact that he thought we weren't paying attention. We weren't paying attention to the problems in this province and that's why we didn't realize how serious the fiscal situation was.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I say to the Member opposite, and I say to all people in this province, all of us in the province were concerned about the fiscal situation. In fact, from very early days of the former administration and certainly during the heyday of the former administration when we had peak oil and peak production, annual report after annual report of the Auditor General, every single year, Mr. Speaker, spoke of the fact that this province, while enjoying the highest revenues that we ever seen in this province, we also were spending way beyond our means.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the final year of the former Progressive Conservative government, they told us we'd be \$1.1 billion in deficit. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's a huge number. When this administration, when the Liberal administration took over we found out that we weren't \$1.1 billion in deficit. Just like throughout their entire time in government, Mr. Speaker, that was an incorrect financial assumption. They weren't \$1.1 billion; they were close on \$3 billion in deficit.

For those listening, the difference in deficit and debt – because people get confused about this, Mr. Speaker – deficit is what you run up in the one year. That's how much you overspent in one

year. It accumulates into debt over the longer term. That's a simple way of describing it, but it kind of helps understand when we say close on \$3 billion in deficit, that's where they were heading, because they overspent that much in one year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I listened with intent in that speech, and I listened to some of the revisionist memory, I call it, because it wasn't quite, it didn't quite lay out the fabric of the situation that this province found itself in in December of 2015. It was a very difficult realization that this government had to come to, that we were really in serious, very serious financial situation, that indeed if we did not seize control of it we would not have control of our destiny.

Mr. Speaker, when you really consider that we have to spend more in debt repayment than we do on education, more on paying down our debt than we do on education, I think that really rings true to people as to how serious the fiscal situation is.

Now, I'm responsible for the Department of Natural Resources, and part of the Department of Natural Resources is being responsible for energy generation in this province, being responsible for ensuring a stable, secure electrical system. Now, when I came into my role as minister responsible for not only the electric system, but also Muskrat Falls, Nalcor, I started to realize just how serious the situation was and how out of control the project was.

We brought in EY very quickly, Mr. Speaker; known as Ernst & Young, now calling themselves EY, an internationally renowned accounting firm who reviewed the project and said what the previous administration had told us in September – and remember this was December now – I think it was over \$7 billion, was now over \$9 billion, was now – that assumption wasn't correct. They gave us a series of recommendations that we have been actively, actively working on.

This administration has put in place a new senior executive, chief executive officer named Stan Marshall, who many, I would say almost everyone in this province would know from his success with Fortis. He's renowned internationally for his experience in the energy

sector. He's renowned internationally as being a very credible, hardworking, dedicated CEO, and who knows how to put things right.

This past week, Mr. Speaker, we had the annual general meeting of Nalcor. I'm going to tell you some of the results of their past year, past successful year. They're getting things under control. Really, in the last year we've been very diligent, methodical. I often say inch by inch we'll get this project under control, and that's exactly what we are doing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Marshall is CEO. We have now an expanded, and I would say stellar board of directors that bring incredible competence to Nalcor. It's headed by Brendan Paddick, one of our – I think my colleague had just said we are blessed with an entrepreneurial spirit and strength within our business community, and I would say Brendan Paddick leads that pack, Mr. Speaker. He is world renown as well. Led by Brendan Paddick, 11-person board of directors, the largest board of directors Nalcor has seen. So it gives depth, breadth, ability to have committees and it certainly has been helpful.

So EY, new CEO, world-class, world-class board of directors. Through the world-class board of directors and our stellar CEO, we were able to negotiate with Astaldi, something that had been outstanding for a couple of years, Mr. Speaker, where the project was slipping behind schedule. Things weren't progressing well, and our major contractor for the powerhouse was having a lot of challenges. We were able to negotiate with Astaldi and finally get a deal with them.

We also were successful in expanding the loan guarantee by the federal government and saving the project an incredible amount of money. That's just being finalized now, Mr. Speaker. It was announced in November that the federal government was extending that loan guarantee. So it's outstanding that we were able to do that in such a short period of time so methodically and diligently, and inch by inch.

You will note that you would have heard in the last year some of the changes to the project. Through the CEO and the board of directors we created a distinct separation from Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, which is a regulated utility,

and Nalcor's non-regulated businesses. We wanted to separate those.

We followed through on some of the recommendations of the Liberty report. We're making sure that the regulated businesses, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro – and I'll come to some of the things they've been doing over the last while because they're working very, I'll use the word diligently again, to make sure that the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has a stable, secure electricity system.

We've just come through a number of days of storms, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, it's been quite a stormy winter. I want to say thank you to Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and Newfoundland and Labrador Power for the work they have done. They have been very – in the harshest of conditions, they make sure that we have electricity. I want to, on behalf of the people of the province, thank the front-line workers but everyone in those two utilities that are getting things done.

Also, Mr. Speaker, through the CEO, the dividing of the management of the Muskrat Falls Project into two separate components, transmission and power development was very important. They are two big projects. If you consider the powerhouse and the dam and the generation – I call power development – the generation side of things from the transmission side, transmission of course of ensuring we have access to the North American grid, and that work is underway. There are a tremendous lot of regulatory requirements around being connected to the North American grid. There was a lot of effort, a lot of work being done around transmission. That's a project in and of itself, and of course the power generation.

Also this year, Mr. Speaker, Nalcor recorded revenues of \$824.1 million, an increase over the previous year. Operating profit for 2016 was \$136.3 million, an increase of \$152.3 million over 2015. These are very, very positive signs that things are getting under control.

The Muskrat Falls Project, while many, many people in the province are very troubled, this government is troubled by this project and why it was brought to fruition, but, Mr. Speaker, we are containing, controlling and ensuring that it is

on track. That is what we set out to do, and we'll continue to be diligent in our efforts to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to lose my time. Before I go on to some other bright lights, besides the control and the benefits to the province of making sure that Nalcor and the Muskrat Falls Project is on due course, I also want to talk about oil and gas because the Lieutenant Governor in the Speech from the Throne did reference oil and gas in talking about how our offshore oil and gas industry is growing, is developing and what we're doing as a government to ensure it.

I want to talk a little bit about the extensive geoscience that we've been doing. The former administration started us down this path, so I would say to the former administration that was a good initiative. It did give us some seismic geoscience and it is bearing fruit for the province. This high-quality data on the offshore prospects is getting worldwide attention. Our seismic program is one of the largest in the world today, 2D seismic offshore. We have 145,000 line kilometres of modern 2D seismic. We have well defined about 20 basins.

This is to put this into perspective for those listening today. Right now, all the projects that we have are in one basin; they are in the Jeanne d'Arc Basin – a very prolific and a very well-known basin. That is where Hibernia is; that's where Hebron will be in this Jeanne d'Arc. We have other basins offshore, and we want to continue to encourage and grow the development of our offshore oil and gas industry.

In August of last year – and we will do this again, Mr. Speaker, as we move forward – we had an independent resource assessment, covering the area of what is called the West Orphan Basin. So, for those that are listening, you have the Jeanne d'Arc Basin, you have the Flemish Pass Basin – the Flemish Basin – and now you have the West Orphan Basin. They've identified 25.5 billion barrels of oil in that basin and approximately 20 trillion cubic feet of gas potential. Think about that, Mr. Speaker. This isn't a new basin and we went out this year – that basin attracted global attention.

When the land tenure was underway in November, we had a lot of interest. Since I've been minister about seven new oil and gas entrants have come to Newfoundland and Labrador and are doing more work in those basins to make their discoveries, and we're very much looking forward to continued efforts to grow our offshore oil and gas industry; \$758 million committed in exploration this year. It was one of the largest land tenures in the world today and especially in offshore. This year, in 2017, there is work being done off the coast of Labrador and we're looking forward to a land tenure in that area as well.

Mr. Speaker, we have developed an oil and gas council that is working diligently, that is really setting priorities to position the province as a preferred global location for offshore oil and gas. We're working towards decreasing the time from prospectivity to production. So if you look at Hebron, Hebron was actually discovered in the early 1980s but is just now coming into production at the end of this year. What we're working towards doing is decreasing that time.

We want more discoveries being made and we want to quickly then get into production. So we're working towards that end, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at innovations. We're looking at making sure the regulatory environment is globally competitive. We're making sure that everything that we're doing is encouraging more and more benefit to the province and more and more growth in the sector.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want my time to run out without talking about mining. This is the third, what I'm going to say, major activity of the Department of Natural Resources – incredibly important to the province. We have over 7,000 people employed in good, high-paying jobs in that industry and our shipments for the next year, for 2017, is going to be \$2.9 billion. We rank 16th in the most attractive jurisdiction globally. So we're rising in terms of how attractive our jurisdiction is in increasing the amount of work being done in the province.

I want to talk about some of the mining initiatives in the province. IOC has just announced that they're expanding their mine; that happened in February. They've committed a \$79 million investment to develop Wabush 3

Project. We've got Tata Steel doing a high-grade iron ore project in Labrador's Northern Menihek region; represents about a billion dollars – a billion dollars – in investment in the area.

We've got construction of the Long Harbour processing plant. It was completed in late 2016, but they're continuing to do their work. It employs about 500 people. When it reaches full capacity, it will have about 50,000 tons of finished nickel.

Voisey's Bay mine expansion project, we're starting to go underground at Voisey's Bay and we're looking to go from open pit to underground mining set to begin in 2020 – a big investment in that area of 400 full-time positions. Canada Fluorspar is underway, Mr. Speaker, and construction is expected to be carried out over the next two years.

We've got Rambler Metals and Mining doing great work; you've got Anaconda; you've got Alderon, even looking at restarting their mining activities. Mr. Speaker, there are great things happening in our mining industry. We're encouraging them, we're working with them, and we're investing. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador supports the mineral industry through public geoscience. We go out every summer, just like we do 2D seismic in our offshore, we do public geoscience to make sure that we know what opportunities we have in our mining industry. We do prospector training, we provide funding to support grassroots prospectors and we do a mineral incentive program.

Mr. Speaker, great things are happening in the province. We had to spend the last year getting things under control, doing the due diligence, the work that needed to be done to build that foundation, but the opportunities lie ahead. We've got a great, strong, spirited people. We have plenty of opportunity in the oil and gas industry, in mining, and in our energy sector.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me time to speak.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Look at that; look at the applause I'm getting here today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a privilege to get up today and speak on behalf of the beautiful district and the beautiful people in Cape St. Francis. I have to apologize to some of my colleagues across the way because the last time I got up and spoke, a couple of them took a couple of words really right to heart. I accused them of being scared and being frightened in their district. They all got up afterwards and they all said I wasn't scared – I wasn't scared. It reminded me of my son and daughter when they were little and they used to be frightened to death. I said: Don't be frightened. And they always used to say: No, Daddy, I'm not afraid; I'm not afraid.

So when I heard the Members across the way get up and the very first thing that came out of their mouth was the Member for Cape St. Francis, he accused us –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: – of being afraid, and every one of them got up – it was so funny to watch it because it brought back good memories of the childhood of my children – they weren't afraid either. I understand; you weren't afraid. No, you weren't, so don't worry about it.

Mr. Speaker, it was interesting now to get up today and to follow two ministers. I always enjoy the Throne Speech; I really do. The Throne Speech is about direction. It's about what government plans to do in the future. There's not a lot of information in the Throne Speech and I've been here for – I think this was my eighth Throne Speech now and they're all similar. They're all about the direction that government sees themselves going in. But this one in particular, I understand a lot of things that

are there, but I don't see any direction and I don't see any plans.

The Minister of Natural Resources got up before me and she talked, that people have hope. She must be living in a different place than I'm living in because the people that I talk to have very little hope, but they're looking for it. They want a way to have hope. They want to be able to see something in the future that gives them hope. Again, I don't know where they're going to get it to, I really don't.

I know a budget's coming this week, and we know what happened with last year's budget. The whole province, everybody was in – there were protests outside, there were people just devastated by what was happening here in this province and the cuts they did. Most people said it's too much, and most people realized the financial situation we found ourselves in. Most people did, but when you talk to seniors or you talk to people that are on fixed income, and talk to young families and talk to anybody, students, everybody in this province.

Everybody was affected by last year's budget, and affected in a big way. A young person's car insurance. It could be a senior with over-the-counter drugs. It could be a student wanting to buy a book. There were so many different things. I'm going to talk a little bit about them once I get into my speech here today, but those were the things.

Two ministers got up and talked about hope. I'm hoping – I'll tell you what I'm hoping. I'm hoping this is going to be a great budget. I'm hoping there'll be some relief for the people in this province. I'm hoping that what people expect is what they're going to get. They expect good governance, they expect them to be taken care of, and they don't expect the burden to be put on their shoulders all the time.

We look at different statistics that are coming out. One that I'm hearing a lot of, and it's a big concern to me, it's 30,000 less jobs in a province of 500,000 people. That's unbelievable. That's unbelievable when you think about it.

I'm going to speak a little bit about the fishery now in a few minutes. The devastating – what's happening there, I don't know if those 30,000

jobs are included in what's happening today with cuts and what happened last week with cuts. What's this going to do to our communities?

People look to government to give them hope, to lead the way to make sure their lives are better. We can talk about what happened five or six years ago, we can talk about what happened two years ago. People want to know what's happening to them today. I talk to families all the time, and they're concerned. They're concerned that this government has absolutely no plan for them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: Absolutely no plan in place for their future. Whether it's a grandparent who's concerned about their grandchildren, it's a parent concerned about their child, or a child concerned about their parents. People want to see hope. People want to see a plan and they want to see things getting done that make their lives better. Not to be unfair; all we hear from this government across the way – every day the Premier gets up and talks about doubling the electricity rates.

AN HON. MEMBER: Terrible.

MR. K. PARSONS: It is absolutely terrible. It's so terrible the people – that's fearmongering with the people, when they know the difference. There are ways to get these rates down. They know it, but they're not going to tell the people that because they're going to try to come in with the big hero thing and say, listen, oh we saved you. Well, they're not going to say – why do that to people today? That is mean. That is mean to do that to people. To put fear in people, it's absolutely mean. I can't believe you're doing it. You don't need to do that. Be truthful with the people.

People want you to be truthful with them. So if you know down the road, listen, there are all these little things we can do to reduce your rates and we're going to do it. That's what people want to hear. They want hope, but you give them absolutely no hope; absolutely no hope at all.

This government has been in power for 17 months, and I've yet to see what the plan is for the people of this province. I've yet to see what your plan is for this whole province and what you're going to do about the jobs that are going to be lost. The 30,000 jobs you talk about, that you actually talk about and say there are 30,000 less jobs going to be in the province, have you got a plan to get these 30,000 jobs so we don't lose them?

You always talk about the great relationship. The Minister of Advanced Education got up today and talked about the great relationship that your government got with the feds. Yet, that same minister, when he was in the federal government, was the saviour. He was the captain of the Marine Atlantic. Every time they did something wrong at all, if they increased anything, he was the first fellow – he was on the NTV news, the CBC news, *VOCM Open Line* talking about rates.

Last year the rates went up and we never even heard tell of him. He never even got up and said one word about it. I don't know why. Because when he was up in Ottawa, that's the only time I saw him on the news every evening. If the rates went at all he was up talking about it, but he's not talking to his cousins now when the rates go up. Why not?

I'm going to just switch to a couple of – my portfolios that I'm critic for; I want to talk a little about them here today. Municipal Affairs is one of them. Recently, government announced they are not going to do the cost ratios anymore like they were with the 90-10, 80-20 and the 70-30.

Now, I'm a former mayor of a small community, and I can tell you – let me tell government that I do agree that waste water and clean drinking water should be a priority. I agree with you, okay, 100 per cent on that. I spoke to mayors and councillors all over this province and they agree with that also, but they also have other issues in their municipalities.

I'll give you an example now. I got a community in my district that did up – they had a five-year plan on their roadwork. So last year they started the roadwork. They picked out the three or four worse roads and next year they plan on doing the

same thing. They set out a five-year plan on 80-20 funding. That plan on 80-20 funding, they're willing – like, if some year they don't get it and some year they do, so be it, but they have a plan. They told their residents, this is how we're going to do it and we'll do it over five, six years, whatever it takes. So that whole plan is gone out the window, because the funding that was there for 80-20 now is gone to 50-50.

What that means on a municipality with \$100,000 worth of work, they had to get \$20,000. Now they have to get \$50,000 to do 50-50. I don't think that government, and I don't think the department – I'm surprised that I saw representatives from MNL there at the table, because I looked and I talked to mayors. I talked to councillors. I read the paper and I saw what came out in – all the mayors from Botwood to Flower's Cove, to St. Anthony, to Corner Brook, to Pouch Cove, to Torbay were all against it. They said, no, we don't want this. We'd rather the way it was. We understand the funding mightn't be there like it was but we'd rather go with the way it was because it will give us a chance to get our priorities out, and they understood.

They understand there's only so much money. If government wants to say this is the priority we're going to look at with clean water, so be it, but give us a chance to go in and give our case why we need – examples. It could be we need a new community centre, maybe the old community centre – like I had a community in my district, the community of Bauline, they used to have their town meetings in the United Church. If anything came up in town they had to go down to the United Church. Their town council office was a small apartment they rented. Now they have a nice, beautiful new building and doing fantastic. This summer there are weddings there. There are all kinds of activities. It's booked solid, and it's great for the community. It brings the community together.

There are other things, like fire equipment. I can remember also when I was mayor of Flatrock – I'll always remember this one – we applied for a fire truck. There were only seven applications in that year because the funding was 50-50 and most municipalities couldn't afford it. They couldn't afford the cost – a fire truck then, I think, was \$240,000, so they couldn't afford the

\$120,000. We went and we looked at it and said, listen, we're going to go with it. In two years' time, they changed it. I could be corrected, but I think the applications went up from seven to about 50. It gave small municipalities all over this province an opportunity to apply for something that they needed in their town. Now you're gone back to cutting that again and people won't be able to apply for it.

It's stuff like bunker suits and equipment that they need. I mean, we can't live without the volunteers we have in our province. Our volunteers are the best around. We have more volunteers than anywhere, and we need them. We need them to survive. Mr. Speaker, there's only one taxpayer. No matter if we do it municipally or we do it provincially or we do it federally, there's only one taxpayer.

Today, I really want to talk a little bit about the fishery. Last week when the cuts came down on the shrimp – and most people knew they were coming. The harvesters and the processors and the plant workers had an idea they were coming; never thought they'd be as devastating as they were.

I know that people wanted to see some way of phasing it in; maybe not go with such a bang all of a sudden. I listened to a shrimp fisherman one evening on CBC and he didn't agree with the science. He said that the science should have consulted with harvesters. What he was saying was he was fishing in Area 6 and his first couple of trips that he had – he had two boats – were the best that he'd ever seen, was the best catches that he had seen.

So I think that's important. Maybe with the change in temperatures in water – there, only last week, we saw pictures of a seal – and you know what I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker – with a 181 female crab in it and two oversized crab. That same fisherman, because I called him and spoke to him, told me there are buckets of shrimp in our seals.

So are we doing anything? Are we planning anything? We don't really know – I don't think anybody knows what the real impact seals have on our fishery. I believe it's something that we should be working with the federal government and with our harvesters to understand that.

I spoke to fishermen in my district today and in 3L crab is going to cut by 26 per cent. That's devastating to the harvesters. It's more so devastating to the plant workers because it's less crab that they got to be able to process.

I understand, talking to fishermen this weekend, that the price of crab is looking good this year, which is really great because at this time they need something very positive. I understand also, something I read this morning, that the price is going to be over \$4 a pound, which is good for the harvesters but the problem here is plant workers. We got 26 per cent less crab, because 3L is the largest area, that it's going to go to our plant workers. So what does this mean?

If you looked with the shrimp last week, we had one plant owner, or I think he is a manager of a plant actually – and it's one of the biggest ones in the province – saying all his plant is going to get is six days a week, he will be able to do it for five weeks, and one shift, where normally they have two shifts on all the time.

This is devastating for rural Newfoundland. It's devastating for every place. We don't know yet what effect it's going to have on the different plants right across this province. I tell you, this is huge. The news we've heard this week is as bad to the fishery as what it was when the moratorium came in. It really is. It's going to be hard, because what we are talking about – and again, the Minister of Fisheries got up the other day when we talked about the revitalization of cod, we talked and I've asked questions before about the advisory council that was supposed to be set up. It was in his mandate letter since day one, 17 months ago. We got a chair but we don't have a committee in place yet, and this was supposed to be able to make us adapt – we need to transfer from shellfish to groundfish and this is not done.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the communities in Newfoundland and Labrador that have plants and the fishermen and the harvesters – I got brothers that are involved in this. I've got friends that I speak to on a weekly basis. This is devastating times in the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador and we need action; we need a plan; we need a strategy; we need something in place.

When the shrimp came out last week, we knew that in Area 6, when the science was done, that they showed a decrease in 62 per cent of biomass. So we knew there was going to be a reduction there. The Minister of Fisheries said last week he's going to give the federal minister a call. He said he supported what the FFAW said that they should phase it in over a couple of years. But he also knew that this was happening, the science came out months ago, so why wait until they do the quota cut to say okay, I'll go up and talk to them now. That doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense when it affects so many people, when it affects so many communities in our province.

Again, I'd love to see the quota on the cod. I believe and I know, talking to harvesters and people in the know, that they understand the cod fishery is not going to come back to what it was before. But what's the plan? Is there any marketing being done? Is there any investigation on where the markets are to? What are other countries doing? What's Norway and Iceland doing with the market of their cod? They're putting their cod into the US market, but we got no plan. We got no plan whatsoever. We're going to say oh, let somebody else do it.

A couple of weeks ago, I went up to the Marine Institute and a big announcement – half the Members over on the other side were up there. They all were there and there was, I think, three or four federal MPs there. They all got up and talked about curling and everything else. It was a love-in like you couldn't believe, but they announced a \$100 million fund. Mr. Speaker, there's no details. There's nothing.

Minister Foote talked last week about DFO making some decisions on it. There are absolutely no details. MP Nick Whalen said he's not even sure what it is. He doesn't know if it's more or less, or whatever it is. He doesn't know what it is. He said I don't know what they're going to do with it.

But today, we're in this province with plant workers, harvesters and processing looking for answers. It was last week that the shrimp was cut. It's today that the crab got cut, with absolutely no plan for the people of this province. No saying listen, this is what we're going to do.

I'm not arguing with science. I won't argue with science, but I think science plays a role, just like harvesters play a role. I remember listening to my father and he could tell me a few things about the fishery, because they knew it. Just like our harvesters today know about what's happening in the water, and they should be consolidated. DFO, science and what's on the ground should be talking and saying okay, this is how it's happening.

I listened to a harvester, like I said, who went to Area 6 this year, caught shrimp, and said it was one of the best years he had. They came early, apparently. I talked to crab fishermen in my area this year that had their best catches in crab last year. Now, yes, I talked to other fishermen that, over the 200-mile limit, it was unbelievable. The trips that they had normally with 40,000 and 50,000 pounds of crab, they were coming in with 3,000 or 4,000 pounds of crab – absolutely no crab there. I got no problem with that at all, but when it came to the inshore – and inshore that was, I think, eight miles off there were lots of crab.

So is DFO talking to these people? Is our government talking to these people? It's time that we get up and represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially in our fishery. Don't just let Ottawa say this is the way it's going to be; represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to stand for a few minutes. I wasn't planning on speaking, but when I heard the Member talking about the cost-shared ratios and what we're doing to municipalities, I had to get up and justify why MNL is supporting this; justify why there are some towns upset, no doubt; but justify what our priority is as a government.

I have to say to the Member: Do you know why MNL is supporting some of this? MNL, if you

speak to them, it is the best working relationship they had in 12 years, with any government that's been in for 12 years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: We consult with them. I can tell you what we won't do. I absolutely agree there are some towns that are upset about the road cost-shared ratio. There are ways we're trying to mitigate that. But I can tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker, from a person who is from a rural part of Newfoundland and Labrador, the district is a rural part of Newfoundland and Labrador, we had a priority. This government had a priority. Their priority was take a dollar, get a federal dollar, put it into water and waste water, or let's put the roads program on a 50/50 basis until we can get more funds.

I'll tell you why. I ask anybody in this province and I ask anybody on this side of the House of Assembly that I spoke to, and I could ask Members over there were talking to me privately: What would you rather have? To get federal money, dollar for dollar, to get asbestos out of pipes, or try to delay your roads program for one year? It's an easy decision. It's an easy decision. I know the Member is over there shaking his head. It's an easy decision for us – very easy decision.

I can tell you what we won't do, Mr. Speaker – and I was flabbergasted by the comments. I heard other Members over there also; I was flabbergasted. In 2015, do you know what they did? That government, those people over there sitting over there now, there are one, two, three, four, five of them, six of them that were part of it – do you know what they did? Left \$34.6 million of federal money on the table; wouldn't sign the agreement. And there are people around this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador with asbestos in their pipes, with no water and sewer, and half that crew now is asking me for the same funds they wouldn't even deliver. And now we're getting criticized because we're getting a priority for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I just let the Members opposite know that the vast majority of money that was spent last year was on water and waste water – the vast majority. The rest of it was split up between

buildings and roads. I'll give you an example of how we're helping out towns with roads; I'll give you a good example. You mentioned one there, the mayor of Bishop's Falls I think; I'll give you the email he wrote me. Anybody who doesn't think the cost-shared ratio should change must be living in another planet; that was the email he wrote me. That's the email he wrote me. He said as for the cost-shared 50-50 for the roads – do you know what he said? Just make towns to sharpen the pencil better. I'll show it to you after. That's exactly what he wrote me.

So when you get out in the media with things but the actual comments that are being made to us, to me personally – and I heard the mayor of Bishop's Falls and I don't mean to be picking on the mayor of Bishop's Falls; I know him. But I heard his comments he made. He said the business people are going to be upset because there's not going to be as much work in Bishop's Falls this year. I'll just let the mayor know and let the Opposition know also because it is very important to make statements that were made not just today but in the last little while – last year there was about \$225,000, \$250,000 maybe on roads. This year, Bishop's Falls: \$1.3 million in water and waste water. That's the difference. That's what happens when you leverage the federal money. I make no apologies for leveraging federal money.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: I'll tell you another thing, Mr. Speaker, what I won't do. I won't do it. If we're going to make a decision – and I'm glad the caucus supports me on it because I did push for the priority of water and waste water because I saw a lot of towns without water, a lot of towns with asbestos in the pipes. I tell you one thing we won't do. One thing we won't do, Mr. Speaker, is what this government did the year before they left. I say to the Member for Cape St. Francis, you weren't in Cabinet. I'll tell you what they did.

They went out with a three-year, \$20 million per year funding for capital works. Do you know what they did? Spent it all in two years. In 2015, they put out the applications – and it's all on file; I can show it to you. I know the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island is laughing his head – that's all right; people with asbestos

aren't laughing. People with asbestos who can't drink the water, they're not laughing. We're trying to help people. You can laugh as much as you like.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what they did? They spent all the money. In 2015, they sent out all the applications to say put your application in and there wasn't one penny to spend. Now if you expect me to let municipalities go out and put an application in saying it is going to be 90-10 roads and then change it halfway through, it ain't my style.

If I'm going to do something upfront, I'm going to do it upfront and I'm going to say here's the reason why we got to do it and I apologize for doing it but we made a priority. We, as a government, made a priority. The priority is water and wastewater, and we stick to it. This government refuses to put an application out with false information that's not going to be beneficial to the towns. Because when they put the application in, they will say it's 90-10, and then end up being 50-50. We are being honest with the people.

Mr. Speaker, they brought up a lot of things. Here's one of them. I'm just trying to find the notes that I had here about the – I made a Ministerial Statement today and it was the Clean and Safe Drinking Water Workshop. I could see where the government is coming from. I can honestly see – and I thank the Member for Cape St. Francis for being so kind today because they are great people.

I will tell you something, here's the difference between this government and that Opposition when they're in government. Clean and Safe Drinking Water Workshop, take a guess – in 2012, no-show; no minister showed up to it. In 2013, no-show; no minister showed up to it. In 2014, no-show. In 2015 –so you can see where their priority is at, Mr. Speaker. You can see why that we, as a government, said water and wastewater is a priority.

We will try the best that we can with the help of the federal government to try to give clean, safe drinking water to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, to the residents which are asking, which the Members opposite – I'm going to say this. I'm not going to name any Members. There

hasn't been one Member on the opposite side that hasn't asked for clean, safe drinking water. Not one. Do you know how many asked for roads? Zero. So when they stand up there as an Opposition and talk about we have roads as our priority – zero asked for roads.

So when you want to say that we are doing the best we can with the money we had, I have no problem saying that we made the priority. When people stand up and say, well, the amount the money is being spent –

AN HON. MEMBER: And MNL agrees.

MR. JOYCE: And MNL agrees, because they understand the priority. They understand what people are without water and wastewater. They understand when the water towers need to be replaced. Do you know something? Mr. Speaker, \$209 million is being spent this year – \$209 million. Plus, there is another fund that they are going to apply for, Small Communities Funds. Another \$30 million they can apply for. Over the next three years, \$580 million with the help of our federal counterparts in Ottawa, Judy Foote and all the MPs in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: And we stand to be criticized for all this. Be criticized for giving clean, safe drinking water –

AN HON. MEMBER: And getting federal money.

MR. JOYCE: – and getting federal money dollar for dollar when they're leaving \$34.6 million on the table. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, how many houses or how many communities that could service in Newfoundland and Labrador if they had to have signed it? Do you know how many?

Just think \$34.6 million for rural Newfoundland and Labrador which they never availed of. They didn't have time to sign the letter to send up to try to match the funds, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine that? I know, Mr. Speaker, it's unimaginable. I agree with you, it's unimaginable that a government would be so irresponsible to do that.

I just want to let the people know the stuff we're doing to help out towns, and I understand. This 50-50 hasn't been around in 20 years, by the way. It only came by in about 2008, I think it was, when the big oil – 2007 for some, 2008 when it became 50-50. That's when the big oil boom came up and that's when they were flush with cash, Mr. Speaker. Instead of being honest with the residents at the time, do you know what they did, a \$2.8 billion deficit, Mr. Speaker – a \$2.8 billion deficit.

It's easy to say look what we did 90-10 when the oil boom was on, but look where we're at today, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to put in programs but they have to be sustainable. They have to be sustainable. You just can't take a program and put it in because everybody is going to like us, but our grandkids and kids down the road will have to pay for it, Mr. Speaker. That is the irresponsible way. The responsible way is here's what we can work with, here's our priority and here's how we're going to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say with MNL, we have a great working relationship with MNL. Do we always agree? Of course not, but we work on the best solutions that we can for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, then look at some of the situations we're facing right now. This is what boggles my mind. If I was part of a decision and the decision was the wrong decision, you turn around and you say, well, hold it now. How could I have made it right, instead of just criticizing the wrong decision? The deputy premier bloated government, that is kind of on us. That was the deputy premier of the province. The deputy premier of the province made that statement.

Mr. Speaker, I know I only have a few minutes left, and I got to speak – I heard the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Topsail, he stood in his chair and he was talking about the current Premier. He said – I never met his father. He said, my dad said if you say something, your word should be a bond. Your word should be a bond. I see some Members shaking their heads. I bet his dad didn't bring up about the hospital and long-term care because he never kept his word to the people of Western Newfoundland. So how hypercritical, Mr. Speaker, to stand up and say your word got to be your bond.

I can show you on six different occasions when the hospital and long-term care was supposed to start in Corner Brook, and guess what? It never started, and he has the audacity to stand up and say to the current Premier, well, your word is your bond. Of course, that doesn't mean hospitals and long-term care obviously. That don't mean hospitals and long-term care, because I tell you, I lived through that. I fought for that, and I know the Member for Corner Brook fought for that, and I know the Premier fought for that. We had support of the caucus.

There's going to be more done in Central and the Waterford, Mr. Speaker. Do you know why? Because we had to get our fiscal house in order, and when we get our fiscal house in order we start making priorities. We won't be doing things haphazard on the back of an envelope. When they looked for the \$5 billion infrastructure program, even the Auditor General couldn't find it, so how are the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador going to know how it was spent.

I just have to let people know, we are trying to help out towns with the roads in a different cost-shared ratio. I'll give you an example. The Department of Transportation has helped to piggyback on some tenders. So when there's a bigger project right in a certain area of the province, if there are smaller tenders that can be added on to it, it would save the cost of mobilization and demobilization. That's the kinds of things we're working on.

We're working also with the federal government to see what we can do next year for money for roads. This is a temporary measure we're working on. I make no apologies, Mr. Speaker. When I go to Lark Harbour, not one house in Lark Harbour in the Humber – Bay of Islands is on water or sewer, not one house. I make no apologies for making that a priority.

I can go across this whole House and pick out areas where we need water and waste water, Mr. Speaker. I make no apologies for taking that money and matching it with the federal government. I'd stand up for anybody who has asbestos pipes and try to help them to make sure they have clean, safe drinking water.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: The Town of Irishtown – Summerside, Mr. Speaker, still has a boil order advisory on. Do I make an apology because I can get money from the federal government to help with this boil order advisory and get clean, safe drinking water? Of course not.

The City of Corner Brook, water separation, sewer separation, do I make apologies that we can get the funds from the federal government that otherwise would never be done to fix the bridge on Main Street in Corner Brook? I could go through each part of this district here, all throughout here and in Members' opposite – and even the Members' opposite, Mr. Speaker, because I could tell you thing, they'll stand and say one thing but when we chat, the letters say completely opposite.

I'm not here to criticize; I'm just here to defend what we did. If we wanted to be dishonest we would have sent out the application saying 90-10 roads. When it comes back: oh, we made our decision. It's going to be 50-50 now. Sorry.

I refuse. If I'm going to stand up in front of a town council and if I'm going to take any abuse because of the decisions I made, at least they are going to respect me for making the decisions. They may not like the decisions I made but they'll respect me because that's the decisions we had to make. Some will agree with it, some will disagree with it, but I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, I will make that decision.

I can tell you, when we spoke to caucus and we said to caucus here's the decision we have to make. Do you know what they said? I'd rather have someone drinking safe drinking water without asbestos and have a two-year road program instead of a one-year program; especially on two things, Mr. Speaker, when we can tap into it dollar for dollar with the federal government.

The majority of the money that was spent here in Newfoundland and Labrador was on water and was on waste water, Mr. Speaker. If any of them wants to know the facts, come over. I'll break it down for you, not a problem. This is not us against them. This is trying to ensure we're given a priority for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, which is water and waste water. The federal government, I have to

say, came onside. They stepped onside and they're remaining onside, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you why. They understand the needs of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. They understand the needs of it all.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on, on many occasions about – and I know the three-year multi-year program, Mr. Speaker, that came out. I'll just give you an example. Some towns may have gotten a bit less but they can apply for more funds. The majority of money, the three year multi-year, I'll just give you an example of how much better off they're going to be. The numbers are a bit small, so I have to use my glasses, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just use the one in Lewisporte. This year, because of the funds they got, we leveraged, will be up over \$3 million than what they would have had if we just had to go with the three year capital works, three year multi-year program. Because we leveraged federal money so they can have more for what their priorities are in the town.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just go to Placentia, over \$4 million more; Paradise, \$2.5 million more. Just look at Happy Valley-Goose Bay, \$16 million more; Grand Falls-Windsor, \$6 million more; Gander, with the treatment centre they needed, sewer treatment centre they needed for the school. Gander this year, because we leveraged federal money, will be in more money, \$20 million more this year than they received and we're being criticized.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: And we're being criticized. We're being criticized because we're not tapping into the federal money.

Mr. Speaker, I can keep going here. Conception Bay South, \$3.3 million more. And they got the audacity to stand up and say you should have cut the roads. Yeah, we had to make a decision, but look at the extra funds. This is out of 22 multi-year capital works programs in towns.

We can go across; I can go through ever district here, every district. We received more money than they received in a number of years because of the Canada program with the federal

government, the Canada build fund. More money than they had in memory, spent in towns, the Building Canada Fund.

Mr. Speaker, Bay Roberts is getting over \$1 million more. I could keep going here. I said Grand Falls-Windsor is getting \$6 million more; Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Corner Brook is getting \$4 million more. So that's the priority we made.

If you wanted to take all this money, if you wanted to take the \$580 million and pick out one little bit of it and say that's bad. You can do it. You can absolutely do it, but I can tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker, when this government stands up on capital works, and as long as I'm in this position, lucky enough to be in this position, I will not mislead towns. I will not put an application out, let them fill out the application, and then three months later say: oh, by the way, we just changed your cost-share ratio. I will not put an application out like the previous government did and say: oh, by the way, we have no money in that program. We already spent it two years prior because an election year was coming up.

If you want to talk about being honest, if you want to talk about the leader who happened to be premier, the Member from Topsail talking about your bond is your word. When you put out the applications for all the towns in the province and say send it in, we need it by November 15 – not one cent there. Your father must not have mentioned about capital works. He must have forgotten about hospitals, long-term care and capital works.

What that government did to the towns of this province, Mr. Speaker, was unacceptable and we refuse –

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: – to be part of that, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I love getting this applause when I stand up, Mr. Speaker.

Given the hour of the day, I move, seconded by the Member for Bonavista, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, at 1:30 in the afternoon.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, at 1:30 p.m.