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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA*

Wednesday

5 April 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Admit strangers.

**Orders of the Day**

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call Order 2, third reading of Bill 5.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, that Bill 5, An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law, be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 5 be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Bill 5 has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 5)

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 1, Address in Reply.

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

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

**MR. BRAGG:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

It’s great to be here on a Wednesday morning and to get up and speak on Address in Reply, talk about the Speech from the Throne, *The Way Forward to Greater Prosperity*.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into what I have to say, I want to bring some attention to some – I guess you would call it, not a weather bomb but a snow bomb that was dropped on my district over the last two to three days. We started off with a polar bear, and now we ended up with over 100 centimetres of snow. I’d just like to bring attention to all the workers, all the contractors, all the highway workers, all the town crews –

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

**MR. BRAGG:** I’ve been in constant contact with everyone out in the district, and we have numerous roads not yet open. I put a posting on Facebook this morning advising people if you have to get out, if you can get out, exercise caution. People on this equipment have been working long hours and they need you to respect their working space and help them through this. If you’re out and about today, take your time.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I’ll get back to the Speech from the Throne, *The Way Forward to Greater Prosperity*. I’m not going to get up here and remind the Members opposite of how we got here – they all know. They’re all googling it over there this morning. They’re saying how can I hold my head high after spending the lottery.

Well, being the positive type that I am, I’m not going to spend a lot of time looking back, because it does say *The Way Forward to Greater Prosperity*, and I look forward to prosperous things. I’m always proud to rise in this hon. House and talk about scenic and historic district. And it’s a pleasure to sit back and listen to the Speech from the Throne. I

noticed one of the quotes was, “Our world-class tourism experience and rich culture will greet you at the door.” I thought, my God, that must be written for my district because tourism and culture is exactly what Fogo Island – Cape Freels district is all about. My best example, although they’re snowed in this morning, would be Tilting on Fogo Island.

If ever you want a cultural experience, you should go over to Tilting and visit Tilting. Tilting has a direct connection with Ireland, so they’re Irish descendent, their Irish accent, their way of life, the way that they portray things, their events throughout the year is something I would recommend everybody do.

I know sometimes I drop my T’s and add an H where I shouldn’t, and everyone has a way of saying they know where you’re from based on your dialect. But if you ever talk to anyone Tilting and say where you from, they say, just listen to me. So that can tell you when you talk about culture and where they’re from.

I always have to say too to my Avalon counterparts, my district is not Florida, but it’s where others come from this area, from the Avalon region, to visit. That’s one thing that I would like to provide about my district. I always said it was a four-season district.

So if culture abounds and meets you and history at every door – just think about it. In my district, we had the Barbour site in Newtown. Thousands visit there every year to see how people live in years gone by. While there, you’ll learn the story about *Forty-Eight Days Adrift* where in 1929 Captain Joe Barbour, skipper on the *Neptune II*, a three-mast schooner ran into trouble. They were returning from St. John’s with a load of groceries for the winter. They were carrying a load of cod and salt fish. It was November 29, they ran into a storm. Today, we’d probably it the perfect storm but back then the boys on the boat called it another day at the office.

The *Neptune* got battered for days and driven off course. All three masts were broken and, for 48 days, they drifted in the North Atlantic. You have to think everyone at home had them given up for lost, but on January 16, 1930 they drifted ashore in Scotland. The first thing the skipper did was to send a message to his mom.

Mr. Speaker, something like Brad Gushue when he won the gold medal, the first thing he did – only the technology was a little different and the message was very simple: Arrived in Scotland; all are well.

Mr. Speaker, that was a time of wooden boats and iron men. Meanwhile, I left out many of the details because I encourage everyone to visit the Barbour site, but I’ll give a hint of other things to learn there. There’s a story of a Mrs. Humphries who was on the boat; she was passenger. Then there was another story of how the gas motor came to Newfoundland and it had to do with *Forty-Eight Days Adrift*. So I encourage everyone to visit the Barbour site and learn about our history.

If that was a step back in time, let’s drift on over to Fogo Island where you can stay and play on one of the most historic islands, and stay at the ultramodern Fogo Island Inn; 29 rooms with panoramic ocean view; the rates, a little pricey for most of us, from \$1,500 to \$5,000 a night. Initially, many believed the founder, Zita Cobb, was flushing her money out into the Atlantic, but the Shorefast Foundation has made it happen on Fogo Island.

I don’t know if you can remember the TV show on about the Vietnam War, *MASH*, where the chopper was landing every day – the locals in Joe Batt’s refer to their town as *MASH* because there are that many choppers landing on the hills every day.

So these guys, they have enticed the rich and famous from all over the world to visit. Now, for all those not able to stay at the inn there are numerous B & Bs and quaint cottages, so the tourism on Fogo Island will rival anywhere else in the province – opportunities abound in my district, Mr. Speaker.

Couples are lining up to get married on Fogo Island. The last time I was over there, Mr. Speaker, it felt like Vegas, only there were no Elvises on the corner but there were Marjories and Susies lining up everywhere with licences to wed.

So that’s a couple of attractions, then next to that we have the beautiful Change Islands, which is exactly two islands joined by a little bridge that

is across it. If you ever go there, you'd never drop your camera. But over there we have a unique thing too; it's called the Newfoundland Pony Sanctuary. And Netta over there, she has 12 ponies in her stables. I think Netta would think more over the ponies than she probably does her spouse, because she spends more time with them. The thing over there, though, it's somewhat like Disney. Disney you have to be four feet high to ride a ride in Disney, but to ride a Newfoundland pony you have to be four feet or less. So I encourage everyone to go over and visit that.

The other thing in my district, Mr. Speaker, is the numerous sandy beaches. From Cape Freels, Lumsden to Musgrave Harbour you will find miles and miles of sandy beaches. If we could only get the weather and the sun to go with it, we would have some of the best accommodations and best beaches in the world to visit. You can stay and play at our numerous accommodations along with the beaches. People staying at the Beach House Inn are truly amazed by the miles of beaches. They'd rival any Florida beach – the only thing missing, like I said, Mr. Speaker, is the sun. So I'm going to talk to the minister in charge of climate change to see if he can bring some more of that up our way.

Being a true Newfoundlander and Labradorian, we make the best of any season. We have all kinds of parks. We have Windmill Bight and (inaudible) Harbour Park, Indian Bay has a park, New-Wes-Valley has a park. So that's our take on tourism.

Then we have numerous salmon rivers. There are 20 rivers in my district where you can cast a hook. The mighty Gander River is probably one of the best ones. I know the Member for Gander would love to take credit for the Gander River, but it flows out my way and the salmon comes in from there. There are numerous bed and breakfasts; there are outfitters on that river. The number of people that go there is amazing.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** The famous Gander River boat.

**MR. BRAGG:** And that's right, the Gander River boat. It's very unique. We may have our dories on the South Coast and Southwest Coast,

but we have the Gander River boat. It's probably like 22, 23 feet long and three or four feet wide. Just wide enough for the average person to sit in but it's uniquely made to go up the river.

Then we have the groomed trails, which with the snow this year, Mr. Speaker, as you can imagine, the groomer – and this may not impress the Member for Torngat Mountains that we have groomed trails, but for us it's a great way to bring people in. Most people on the Avalon, as you know, while we're suffering snow, it's raining here. So a lot of people go to Central and Western. So that's a big attraction in our area.

We have easy access to the fishing grounds. The District of Fogo Island – Cape Freels has something for everyone and for every season. I encourage everyone to visit my historic and scenic district, but we're just not all about tourism.

I'd like to highlight some of the employment opportunities in my district. There are seven fish processing plants: Barry Group in Dover employs over 250 people for up to nine months of the year; Wood-Pick in Wareham has a sea urchin plant and employs over 30 people; Beothic Fish in Valleyfield, which is multi-species, employs over 300 people; Wheaton's Limited in Carmanville that does multi-species, employs 20 or more; Hodder's fishery in Stoneville, which does sea urchins, 30 or more people. Then we have the Fogo Island Co-op, which does all the species I think that swims in the ocean, employs over 200 people; and on Change Islands they have a plant that does the sea cucumber, that employs another 25 more.

As you would have heard in the last couple of days, the cuts to the shrimp and the crab; it is something that affects my district. It is such a big part of the employment. So I look forward to working with these people.

The other thing we have, we talk about the return to the cod fishery. Cod was what brought John Cabot here. Cod is what put us here and cod is what will probably keep us here. Cod is an important part of rural Newfoundland as anything else that's out there.

We have other important opportunities for employment, from forestry to manufacturing.

Stoneville, in the north end of my district, as forestry workers, saw mills. Centreville has one of the most high-tech, wood molding shops in the province. Most of the moldings, I would think, sold here on the Avalon comes out of the Centreville office. We have a fibreglass shop in Centreville which is second to none for any boat that you can find in this province. The Seabreeze Boat is second to none.

Mr. Speaker, to say that my district is unique is probably not right, but it has something for everyone. It has something for someone for every season.

In the Throne Speech, we talked about we are going to support social enterprise. Well, we had the best example of that with Fogo Island Co-op, which turns 50 this year. They went from the grassroots of cod back to the cod again. I have an organization like the Cape Freels Development Association, which employs a lot of people and brings a lot of employment to the area.

We're looking at providing better services, and there's no better time to talk about better services than what we are doing today out on the islands and out in all the coves and the small towns in my district. Every piece of equipment possible is employed out there today to deal with this snow.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't think I'm going to be using up all of my time. I will stop by saying we are going to, in the Throne Speech, support a healthier province. We are going to work with the schools and communities to develop healthy foundations.

I have a Member's speech later today which is going to highlight one of the teachers from my district volunteering for school sports in the province. That, I think, is very important. I can't wait to give the Member's statement after lunch. That will highlight the importance of having school sports in these schools to promote healthy living for kids.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I do believe I will take my seat and turn this over to the next person willing to jump up.

Thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Lewisporte – Twillingate.

**MR. D. BENNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member yesterday talked about his unique district and, no doubt, he's a unique character himself.

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

**MR. D. BENNETT:** Before I talk about some of the great things that are happening within our Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, and also Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, I, too, want to send my appreciation to all the hard workers that are out there trying to clear the roads in my district.

Since Friday, Mr. Speaker, we had over 130 centimetres of snow accumulated, and there were areas that had probably, five, six, up to 10 feet of drifts. Crews have been working very diligently to keep the areas closed. So I just want to say a big thank you to them, and I also want to thank all the people in my district for their co-operation and understanding during these difficult times. Most of the roads have been opened now and people are trying to get back to normal life. Schools have remained closed this morning. They haven't been back in session since last Thursday. So I'm sure students are getting eager to get back into the classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in this hon. House to deliver my Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. Since December 2015, I've had the privilege of serving as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development and Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

It was an honour to be selected for this responsibility and it comes after a long career in municipal administration with a focus on tourism and recreation. It is fair to say that I have a strong background in the community sector. One thing I would like to say with all certainty is the minister that I serve as parliamentary secretary has done a tremendous

job in leading this vital portfolio which touches the lives of many people within our communities.

Mr. Speaker, our government is continuing to move forward to enhance the lives of people in our province in a variety of ways. We are addressing poverty, violence and mental health issues, enhancing education, working co-operatively and effectively with Aboriginal communities, improving inclusion for persons with disabilities, and also enhancing health care and wellness.

Providing an enhanced service delivery to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is a priority of our government. Through all stages of their life, Mr. Speaker the people of this province deserves access to quality programs. That is why in late August our government created a new Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development which combine the previous Departments of Child, Youth and Family Services and the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development.

There are natural synergies and areas in both the former departments which overlap, and as a proactive government we had to look at ways on how to best provide critical services across a wide range of society. I'm encouraged by the merger of these two exceptional teams. The outcome is a more responsive approach to the needs of all residents with a strong focus on their individual well-being.

An important point about the creation of the new departments is that there are no changes whatsoever to the important front-line Child Protection Services that are delivered in every region of this province. The safety and protection of our vulnerable population, such as children and youth, is an important focus of this government. It is our goal that the advancements made in child protection will help to ensure children and youth are receiving the best possible services, Mr. Speaker.

We are continuing the ongoing work of building a revitalized child protection system that is responsive to the priority needs of children and youth, as well as continuing to make significant progress in creating a culture of accountability,

excellence and consistency across all programs in all regions.

The protection and healthy development of our children is paramount to the department and the services that we provide. That is why we're always monitoring and assessing our services. In fact, we completed a review of our legislation back last year. A legislation review of the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act* took place between June and December 2016. Following this engagement phase, we are now considering all of the feedback collected to determine how we will move forward. A What We Heard summary document will be posted online later this month.

Mr. Speaker, the review focused on six policy areas: improving information sharing between children, seniors and social development and other stakeholders; supporting prevention services for children in need of protection and enabling children, seniors and social development to licence and make regulations for out-of-home placements; identifying options to improve permanency planning for children and youth is also a priority; improving services to youth in need of protection; and, finally, strengthening services to our Aboriginal children and youth. The youth services program was also an important element of this review as well.

The minister's mandate letter directed her to conduct a review of the programs to ensure the program is responsible to the unique needs of vulnerable youth and it does not discriminate based on whether a child was in care with the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development when they turned 16. The program, Mr. Speaker, provides supportive, residential, financial, education and rehabilitative services to youth aged 16 years and older, and if they are at risk or being maltreated that would be addressed.

There are different requirements for youth to receive services beyond the age of 18 on whether they are in care by their 16th birthday. As age and eligibility for services under the youth services program are defined in the child and youth care protection act, this review was also conducted concurrently with a statutory review. As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, our government is continuing to move forward to

enhance the lives of people of our province at all stages of their lives in a variety of ways.

Mr. Speaker, for some time the public, seniors' organizations and major stakeholders consistently and strongly called for an establishment of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate. In our government's five-point plan, we promised to have the Seniors' Advocate in place, and we are well on the way of honouring that commitment.

On December 13, 2016, legislation to establish the Office of the Seniors' Advocate received third reading in this hon. House. While we already have the mechanism in place to handle information services and to address individual seniors' issues, the core mandate of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will be to address systemic issues impacting our seniors, Mr. Speaker.

The Seniors' Advocate will report to the House of Assembly and make recommendations to government. The advocate will work closely with other entities, including the Office of the Citizens' Representative, and the Seniors' Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador, but it will not duplicate or impede their mandates. We are working hard to have the advocate in place by this spring.

Mr. Speaker, the Status of Persons with Disabilities is also in the minister's mandate letter to review existing legislation and implement inclusion-based legislation for our province. Inclusion-based or broad-based accessible legislation is a growing trend across our country. It goes beyond making buildings accessible to making all aspects of our communities and private and public services accessible to everyone. We know citizens of our province still experience barriers on a daily basis, barriers that exclude people from taking part in their communities, from employment opportunities and even from public services.

Mr. Speaker, we want to hear from the people of our province and work with our community organizations and other stakeholders to develop a made in Newfoundland and Labrador legislation. We will consult and engage with people who have disabilities, and other stakeholders like community organizations,

industry associations and municipal governments. Individuals and groups are already turning their minds on to how this legislation could look.

The Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities has begun discussion on the legislation options. Over 60 individuals recently participated in the federal consultation on this legislation. The Disability Policy Office is monitoring what is happening across the province and within other countries.

In keeping with this theme of accessibility, our government recognizes that transportation is essential to participation and inclusion. We know accessible transportation is not an option in many areas of this province, and for that reason we continue to offer programs that remove these barriers.

Mr. Speaker, the Accessible Vehicle Program is making a real difference in the lives of people by helping individuals and their families retrofit personal vehicles to be accessible. We have improved the application process and are now funding applications on the wait-list from last year. We have opened the program this past fall to accept new applications. Within the 2016-2017 budget, 80 individuals throughout this province have accessible transportation because of this program. The 2016-17 program funded 10 applicants on last year's wait-list, as well as an additional eight on the new applicants.

We know transportation can also be challenging for older adults, as well as persons with mobility issues. Seniors identified transportation issues as one of the main barriers to social participation and engagement. They want transportation that is accessible, available and affordable.

Many residents of our province are benefiting from the continued support of the age-friendly transportation initiative through an investment of \$1.3 million over three years. We committed \$300,000 to support six age-friendly transportation projects throughout the province. Five pilot projects are taking place in different parts of the province and we're working closely with these groups to ensure accountability and sustainability. An evaluation of the program has identified ways to strengthen existing programs through learning and best practices.

Mr. Speaker, the evaluation included other elements that support transportation throughout the province including one in my district, the community wheels project in Twillingate – New World Island, as well as the Accessible Taxi Program and the Accessible Vehicle Program for private vehicles. The Accessible Taxi Funding Program is actively addressing some of the barriers by helping taxi companies add or retrofit their taxis for accessibility so individuals using mobility devices such as wheelchairs or scooters can avail of taxi services.

Mr. Speaker, the accessible taxis can also be used by anyone and are not restricted to just persons with mobility issues. This program has kick-started an interest in providing accessible taxi services. Just two years ago, there was one accessible taxi in our province. There are now 11 in the St. John's area alone. Ridership has gone from zero when there was no option for accessible taxis to 200 in the first month, and now over 1,000 trips a month by persons who two years ago didn't have an option of a taxi.

The Accessible Taxi Program has provided seven grants to taxi companies. Helping companies in St. John's, Dildo and Grand Falls-Windsor add accessible vehicles to their services. In addition, we recently announced two more grants to taxi operators on the West Coast.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to focus some of the great initiatives that are being undertaken by the department and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation over the past while. While the minister at the helm, a series of province-wide stakeholder consultations were launched back on January 10 to review Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation's programs and services. The minister led the review with a goal of ensuring that residents in need have access to safe, secure and affordable housing across the province.

I had the opportunity to attend a session in Gander and was very pleased with the turnout. Stakeholders and other attendees enjoyed the session and networking, and also the learning opportunities. They were very grateful for the opportunity to have their views and opinions heard, Mr. Speaker.

This review set out to identify ways to serve the needs of clients with greater efficiencies and effectiveness. These consultations sought to bring all stakeholders into a discussion as our government implements *The Way Forward* which is our comprehensive vision for getting Newfoundland and Labrador back on a secure and economic footing. In *The Way Forward*, one of the action items committed to this review.

Mr. Speaker, according to the official *Way Forward* document, this review aimed to ensure the mandate of the organization reflects the current priorities, optimize the use of federal and provincial funding to deliver programs and services, and realize efficiency and service improvements, and also to streamline organization with no negative impact on our clients.

I will add, *The Way Forward* is proof that changes we are making and the actions we are implementing are working. In late March, the Premier announced phase two of *The Way Forward* which turned the focus on growth and job creation in Newfoundland and Labrador's private sector. At that event, the Premier announced that the efforts undertaken in phase one resulted in a net annualized savings of \$45 million. In a time of fiscal restraints when every dollar counts, that's a very positive development.

Another thing he announced was the initiative contained in phase two would result in approximately 14,000 person years of employment. Again, in a time when our economy is suffering from a downturn in the global commodity markets and the conclusion of several major, large industry projects in our province, this is very welcoming news.

*The Way Forward* is a plan that will help us to deliver Newfoundland and Labrador back to firm ground and relieve future generations of the weight of the crushing deficit our province is currently undergoing.

Mr. Speaker, in January of this year, the minister, along with the Member of Parliament for Labrador, announced an investment in affordable housing and supportive services for victims of domestic violence and their families for communities in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.



MP Yvonne Jones announced this initiative on behalf of her federal counterpart, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. The provincial and federal governments invested \$600,000 in this initiative, and the Homelessness Partnering Strategy contributed over \$300,000. This investment offered hope and support for victims of domestic abuse and it is something we should all be proud of.

To be able to enhance provisions of stable and secure housing for vulnerable individuals, that is one of the initiatives, I must say, I'm quite grateful to be part of. I think investments like this that involve funding from both federal and provincial governments and stakeholder groups in the non-profit sector show what is possible through strong intergovernmental co-operation. We have been very fortunate to have a strong partnership with our government in Ottawa. Because of this strong friendship and mutual co-operation, we've been able to provide dozens of key investments in Newfoundland and Labrador that simply would not have been possible without.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you a good relationship with Ottawa was not a priority of the last administration. As a result of the poor relations, programs and initiatives were not funded, opportunities were missed and progress stalled. I am glad to serve in a government that has reversed that lonely position. Now we have a direct line to Ottawa and a strong partnership with our federal government that wants the best for the province just like we do, Mr. Speaker. That's something this province has needed for a while.

Just one day after our minister, along with MP Jones, announced the funding in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation also announced a major investment in supportive housing in Labrador West. These affordable housing units will benefit single-parent families and individuals who require supportive housing. Between the province and the federal government, \$1.8 million will be spent on this initiative, made possible through investments in the Affordable Housing Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, this development, in partnership with community groups and the Lab West Housing and Homelessness Coalition. Under our predecessors, a major member of potential partnerships on this scale was missing from the equation. The federal government and the PC government were not able to work together. As a result, many worthwhile initiatives just like the ones I mentioned went to the wayside, but, Mr. Speaker, those days are over. They are just a few of the many worthwhile initiatives undertaken by the department and also the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation in the last few months.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve alongside the minister and the many dedicated bureaucrats and front-line workers who provide the people of Newfoundland and Labrador with valuable and essential services. Through *The Way Forward* and our solid working relationship with Ottawa, I believe we can build on the successes of our first fiscal year and get this province back on track. Already, the changes we have implemented have started to work. Again, I'll reference the \$45 million in savings in just the first six months of our *Way Forward*.

Mr. Speaker, this comes as a result of working to promote a flatter, leaner approach to our government. Now with a focus on growth in the private sector, I believe this province has already started to rebound from the very dire situation it was in back in 2015 when we took office.

This pretty well concludes my time, Mr. Speaker. It's been an honour to rise to Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

It's a great honour, as most of my colleagues like to start their remarks, by just being able to be here in the House of Assembly and to represent your constituents. I represent the great District of Lake Melville, some 100,000 square

kilometres and probably somewhere in the vicinity of 8,500 souls – no 10,000 souls. So it's a pretty low density.

My colleague from Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair wants me to list off the communities. So going from west to east is, that's Churchill Falls, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Northwest River, Mud Lake and Sheshatshiu. So a great variety of indigenous cultures, European cultures, Newfoundland cultures and so on.

In Address in Reply, I think it's most appropriate that we talk about just what was the Speech from the Throne and what it was entailed to do. Frankly, it was to remind everyone in the province that we have a plan. As boring as it may seem to some, it's very important that when you develop a plan to address a variety of serious issues that you stick with the plan.

I can only think about the approximately 50 items that are outlined in *The Way Forward* and the importance of identifying how we're going to do it, when we're going to do it, what will achievement look like, so that these are all measurable. So that we can reflect back whether or not we are able to achieve, where did we struggle, what do we need to do to fix it in the future. The report card we just recently released shows what we are able to accomplish and, frankly, less than some six months, there's no question there's a lot that has been done, there's a lot more that can be done and is being done.

I guess when I was thinking about planning, I was thinking about – I like to look around for examples in my life, and *The Wealthy Barber* comes to mind. Not that I go to a lot of barbers these days, but I think of David Chilton and his advice on financial management. There are several interesting quotes from that very wise barber that provides the author with the wisdom. I just had a couple there, just for example.

First of all, as you receive money make sure you pay yourself first. Essentially, that's meaning put some money away, take care of your debts and ensure that you can ride out those low points, even though right now you may be at a good point. I only have to bring up some of these examples to think back to a lot of the commentary from the team around me, the people in this House when we talk about the

wealth that the province enjoyed some, what is about 10 years ago now when we were at peak oil production, peak oil prices, with tremendous revenues and we were still out spending.

I'm just thinking if a few more people had read *The Wealthy Barber* at that time, maybe we'd be in a different position than we are now.

Also, David Chilton likes to talk about establishing an emergency fund. I think about the criticism we received about the concept of having a contingency fund in our budget just one year ago; yet, I think we've been able to demonstrate the items that we have had to apply to the contingency fund are often items that were completely unforeseen. Situations, for example, like the big storms that have occurred here in the fall and my previous responsibility on the T'Railway. These are the kinds of items where you don't see them coming but you sure need to be ready for them. As that *Wealthy Barber* said, putting aside some revenue to address them when you don't see them coming is very wise advice.

As I've mentioned in this House of Assembly several times, I spent some 14 years in Russia. I was living here but I was certainly working extensively there. I watched a superpower implode. It was amazing. I was there from 1990 to 2004, watching this massive country, incredibly powerful, completely disintegrate.

I look at my colleague, the Page here, knowing where he comes from and knowing some of the regions I worked in, in Turkmenistan, Central Asia and so on, I watched countries completely fall apart. As they tried to rebuild, it was interesting that there was a great deal of chaos for several years, but as oil prices started to increase and production certainly was on the rise, the government, through the 1990s and in through the early parts of 2000, were relying on oil.

Again, oil is not all bad. Certainly, as the Minister of Natural Resources knows, it's a very important resource for us. Canada and this province are indeed very blessed to have such reserves as we do; however, oil and the abuse of the revenue that can come from it can hide a lot of sins.

What I watched happen in Russia is, I think, very parallel in many ways to what I've seen happen here. There were a lot of messes. My role in Russia – I was working with a firm, we were cleaning up oil spills everywhere. Pipelines were falling apart. There had been no maintenance. There had been no monitoring of spills, and oftentimes we would find ourselves coming into an area where a pipeline had broken and it had been spilling for some long period of time. Now foreign aid was coming in to help address the issue.

I guess, I kind of think of ourselves in the same way. I constantly, and even this morning, I am encountering issues that frankly have been germinating for the last several years, punted out into the future and not addressed, and it makes it all the more tougher for us as a government. We have so much hope and aspiration and wanting to do the right thing but constantly pulled back and challenged by – whether it has to be spending more money on servicing the debt than we spend on education, as my colleague, the Minister of Education, indicated yesterday in some of his responses.

That pressure and what it does to any minister, to anybody who has any kind of decision-making capacity in government, is oppressive. It's just such a shame that we didn't, some many years ago, realize the revenue we were enjoying some – it's been quoted some \$25 billion in revenue that we 'shoulda, coulda, woulda' taken clear advantage of and applied it in a great way.

I next wanted to speak a little bit about other kinds of planning. Representing Labrador as I do, with my colleagues from Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, from Labrador West and from the great Torngat Mountains and that great club, I'm really proud to be part of the geography. While there are other great groups and so on within our caucus and within government, being as we are in Labrador, and all being on the same party, I have found it very productive to work with them. We had a great meeting again this morning. Most of us were there dealing with issues that are important to us, and it's a great synergy.

One of the key pieces of what preoccupies us these days is the completion of the Trans-Labrador Highway. As many of us can recall, I

think we can all recall, I think Brian Peckford – not Brian Peckford but Brian Tobin was the premier of the day, and Barney Powers providing a flatbed truck, pulled it down at the end of the Churchill Road at the time, because it certainly didn't go anywhere past Churchill, and made announcements of investment in that project.

A gentleman by the name of Hank Shouse, who was a former mayor of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, he was a nation builder. Even though he is from the United States, he had great hope and provided great determination to ensure that the Trans-Labrador Highway could get started and hopefully one day could be completed.

It is interesting to see the progress that's been made over the last some 20 years. One criticism I hear sometimes from outside of Labrador is, why we are spending so much money on the Trans-Labrador Highway and enjoying great support from the federal government? Well, the fact of the matter is and the answer is that until the project is done we're not connected.

You can have all the lanes of highway, all the pavement you want, but if you can't get from A to B you still need to work on the project. Frankly, that's where we are with some, what it is 1,100 kilometres of highway from St. John's to even where I live in Goose Bay, another 500 to my colleague from Labrador West. My other colleague in the Torngat Mountains, well, he has to snowmobile home. So it's even further for him.

What I'm trying to say is you're not going to accomplish this kind of project in four years. You have to look forward. You have to think 20 years out and you have to make sure you're making progress and doing what you can. I'm pleased to say that we are indeed doing that.

Further to this, and in support of my comment that until it's connected, we're all connected from A to B, is the money we've set aside, that three-quarters of a million dollars to update the feasibility study between Newfoundland and Labrador. Now, why is this important? It's interesting; I have an interesting perspective on this. I actually was involved in the development. I was involved in the proposal process and the development of the feasibility, and then the

fixed link project between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. I was part of a consortium of companies. They bid on the project, we won the project and we did it.

My role was involved in the environmental assessment of that project. It was interesting at the time, folks were genuinely concerned. Yes, there was a change in sort of the social, economic, cultural dimensions, particularly of Prince Edward Island; but, as we all know, Prince Edward Island continues to flourish and continues to enjoy a much more efficient, a much more progressive way to interact with the rest of the country. That is what we are asking for here.

By the way, this isn't a feasibility study for Labrador. This is a feasibility study for the province, and as soon as most folks realize that the majority of the population, which is some 94 per cent of us which live on this Island, realize that finding a more efficient, direct access route through to Central Canada where most of our goods come from is going to be a very good thing. Yes, there are going to be changes and, yes, we're going to see some – we're going to need to think again over the long term.

Issues like Port aux Basques and the ferry to Cape Breton, absolutely, we're going to need to continue to use that kind of service. We can't go cutting off our close relationship with the rest of Atlantic Canada.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** A great circle route.

**MR. TRIMPER:** As my good colleague says, this is indeed a great circle route through the Atlantic region and so on. I expect that this is going to be such a tremendous economic opportunity.

I was lucky about, I'm not sure, maybe 15 years ago – I spent a day and a half with Tom Kearns. Many of you will know this name. It was really interesting. My colleague for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair will appreciate this. We spoke, him and I, at a Chamber of Commerce in the Labrador Straits area, south of where she lives. But it was interesting; he spoke about nation building, talked about Sir John A. Macdonald building his railway. Well, I would suggest that the fixed link that will connect Newfoundland

and Labrador finally together physically will be very much a very important part of nation building.

Given I've used so much time, I want to now turn to just another issue. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition was talking about his concern that we had somehow dominated the airwaves, dominated the press, dominated the communications inside this House of Assembly, telling people it's bad, making them feel bad. He used the expression yesterday that people no longer felt like they were first-class residents or citizens of this province.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That's a shame.

**MR. TRIMPER:** Well, I would agree.

I would suggest that our point is that first of all people need to know the facts. They need to realize, as I just said a few minutes ago, we spend more on interest payments than we spend on educating our children. That's a shocking statement and, frankly, that's an embarrassment. So I'm very proud to be a part of this province. I feel like a first-class citizen, but I also feel like a broke first-class citizen.

So getting on with the plan and getting on with a resolution is a very important task and a very important priority. That led me to – and I think they're watching at home, so I'm going to give them a little plug. I was at the in-laws last night, Mr. and Mrs. Hong, having a nice little chat with those people and I happened to have a glance through *The Telegram*.

There was a little article in there, a letter to the editor from a former politician with this House, Peter Fenwick. If people had a little glance at that last night, there were some very disturbing comments. I think further to Leader of the Opposition's comments yesterday about us dominating the negative airwaves, I would refer folks to his call to action which he says in Thursday's budget – and I'll have to change some names for roles here, so I don't get myself in trouble. He says in Thursday's budget the Premier will have to cut close to 8,000 public service jobs if the province is to remain competitive in the long run. Well, what brilliant insight that is in terms of how we're going to get ourselves out of this fiscal situation.

He concludes with a real gem, which is: What is clear, however, is that timid layoffs of 300 or 400 will not be enough to save our future. And having just gone through a series of layoffs and watched the very difficult decisions that we've had to make, both last April, had to make in my department, and what we had to go through in March, and my colleague, the Minister of Health, and the difficult decisions that the regional health authorities have had to do, I find that quite insulting that he is thinking that the decisions and the altered lives of some 300 or 400 people don't matter. Well, I can tell you that every single one of those lives matter.

Having been in the private sector for most of my life, where you let someone go because they are a non-performer or because they weren't working out with a team; but to watch people go out the door because we can't afford them, I found it very, very frustrating. I'm going to make sure I do what I can to ensure that we do not find ourselves in this mess again – again, sticking to the plan. It may sound boring, but my gosh, we are going to get ourselves through this thing. I look forward to a day when – it might have been boring, but you did a very good job at getting this province back on its feet.

I am just sort of zeroing in on some key things, and I thank the Speaker yesterday for allowing an introduction of a very fine young man who is up here. His name was Jonathan Buckle. This is the other side. Despite all the difficult situations that I've just talked about for three quarters of my time, I want to talk some of the real key positives.

Yesterday, we had a young lad here. He had come to my office only recently, him and his father, and he is deaf. Through some surgery that he had received years ago, he had what are called cochlear implants, which has allowed him to have an ability to hear. With upgrades that are needed in advancing technology, it's marvelous the function that we can now provide people who have this hearing challenge. I have to turn to my colleague, the Minister of Health and Community Services, for his role in ensuring that financial support was here for Jonathan and for some 13 other young people of this province. It was, I have to say, extremely heartwarming to have him walk into my office yesterday, excited.

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

**MR. TRIMPER:** I had seen him a few weeks ago and he just couldn't believe the world that he was experiencing around him. Frankly, I think that's why so many of us are in politics, is to make sure we can do good; whether it is one individual, like Jonathan, or to connect our province through a completed Trans-Labrador Highway in a fixed link. It's all about making progress, and it's all about helping our fellow man and woman.

I have just a few minutes left, and I want to comment on a very serious issue that is going on in my district. It is one that by way of taking in two minutes now I'm going to provide a little bit of an update. That is on human health issues around the Muskrat Falls Project.

As the House knows, I've been heavily involved in this issue, both before I came into politics and certainly since. I'm happy to say that with my colleague, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, we will be working very closely. What we've done – and folks will recall that in October, the Premier and I, and the Minister of Natural Resources, along with our colleagues from Labrador spent a marathon session with the indigenous leadership of Labrador. We struck on the idea of creating an Independent Expert Advisory Committee which will, with financial support and good expertise, provide recommendations to government, to myself and my colleague, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

We will take those recommendations and use them in the mitigation and monitoring direction that we would then apply to the project. As the Premier has said, as I have said, this government will not tolerate situations where if we could do something to protect the human health of the people of Lake Melville, and then passed on it because of whatever reason, we will not ignore that. This is not the situation of years gone by. This is not Russia where we ignore issues. This is where we genuinely care about our people and we're going to make sure that they are going to be protected.

I've very much look forward to seeking that advice and, by way of an update, I wanted to indicate that I believe we are in the final steps of

concluding the terms of reference that will guide the committee. I look forward to coming to the House soon to reporting on that. We're just waiting now – the province is reviewing the final text, as are the three indigenous organizations. Once that's complete, I look forward to announcing that, as well as announcing the key staff, the key folks, that will guide us in issuing those recommendations.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat and I thank you very much.

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

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

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

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

Indeed it is always an honour to rise in my place as the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue. I often think of the tremendous privilege each of us are given by those who elected us to govern this province. I thank them for their confidence.

Before I get into my remarks in Address in Reply, I want to say a very special greeting to one of my predecessors, Mary Hodder, who is celebrating her birthday today. Happy birthday, Mary!

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

**MR. BROWNE:** She's still a very active luminary in the community, the Burin Peninsula community, someone who is very involved in her community. She was the first female Deputy Speaker – a terrific trailblazer for the current Deputy Speaker, who does a tremendous job sitting in the Chair, when she's in a good mood, Mr. Speaker. So it's always a pleasure certainly to rise and recognize one of my predecessors and my seatmate as well.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will say thank you to all the Members who have contributed to the debate. As those watching at home can tell, my seatmate and I have a good rapport; if not, we would suffer together. I would say that it's a pleasure to rise in this motion that was moved by the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port last

week for Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. I thank him and the Member for Exploits on that day for their good words and, of course, a special thank you to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for his delivery of the Speech from the Throne last week.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to raise some matters of concern relating to my district. I know and this government knows that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are strong. We are resilient. We are determined and we are ready for whatever challenges come our way. Indeed, that was focused on over the last few days and it is still highlighted in parts of the province that are crippled under severe snowfall amounts.

The Burin Peninsula, as an example, had at least two impasses on the Burin Peninsula Highway, as of this morning, clear. The Grand le Pierre Road was blocked and there were crews out around 10 o'clock last night trying to make a first cut through and then they weren't successful. I just heard from the mayor just a few moments ago who tells me everything is good and trying to normalize and getting back to where they were. So I'm very grateful to the crews. I'm very grateful to all the employees and those who worked very diligently and hard to make that happen.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, in that line, we know there are challenges that come and some things that we can't control. Certainly, there are other things that we can control and things that we can respond to. There is no denying that there are challenges, but what I want to use my speaking time today for is to focus on *The Way Forward*, which is a positive path before us, rather than dwell on the negative.

It is important that we first recognize some achievements. I think it's important to look back, not as far back as prior to the 2015 election because we know the mismanagement, we know what happened and that story has been told, and I certainly have been one of the storytellers of it, Mr. Speaker.

I want to look back on the last year particularly since our government took office, where we passed 71 pieces of legislation compared with an average of 35 pieces of legislation. So for those

watching at home I'll repeat that again; that's 71 pieces of legislation in our inaugural year, compared to 35 pieces of legislation –

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

**MR. BROWNE:** – that the Progressive Conservatives passed in the last 5 year of government. So Mr. Speaker, for those who say we don't have plan – which has become quite a mantra from the Opposition because they have nothing else to say other than hanging their heads into shame for what they did to this province. These are clear facts, these are numbers and numbers don't lie.

So I wanted to take a few moments, Mr. Speaker, to highlight some of the pieces of legislation that we brought forward and some of the initiatives contain therein. Crown lands access is something I think that's important to many rural districts. Increased access for municipalities as an example – so now Crown lands within their municipal boundaries, they will have greater and easier access to it. Across the province now, there has been an increase in the identified areas for access for agriculture.

In my own district in the Goobies area, Mr. Speaker, there has been an identified area. In the Bellevue-Thornlea area there's another identified area, where the department has gone out and done soil samples and tested where the very fertile grounds are to do farming and agriculture. Of course, it's natural for us to think of ourselves as a people of fishing and people of the sea because that's why we came here; that's who we are. Both my grandfathers were fishermen. My father spent some time fishing before becoming a teacher. It's who we are; it's in our blood. Madam Speaker, my wonderful friend, we cannot neglect other industries and we cannot neglect the value in a diversified economy.

So the point of what we have done with Crown lands access, Madam Speaker, is to focus on freeing up the Crown land for economic development. This is something that has been a long time coming and I believe is terrifically important for the province as a whole.

Certainly if you look at my district, of Placentia West – Bellevue, which I often liken to be the

industrial heartland of the Island portion of Newfoundland due to the vast wealth of industry that it holds, we cannot lose sight of the natural resources either, and agriculture is equally as important to anything we're doing. So that is very important.

I also want to make mention of the creation of the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement –

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

**MR. BROWNE:** – and the increase to the Seniors' Benefits. Madam Speaker, for those who are watching at home, today the second installment will be coming out either in direct deposit or the cheques will be going into the mail, depending on what you have set up. This is very important. Unfortunately, this was debated in the House and it was voted against by Members of the Opposition, but it's something we feel strongly in favour of because the seniors of this province have built this province, they have sustained this province, and they deserve every opportunity that we can give them as leaders and as legislators in this province to be able to give back to them.

So that was an investment of \$76.4 million last year in the budget. The Seniors' Benefit was increased by \$250, but also the Income Supplement was introduced for low-income families, seniors and persons with disabilities. That is a very important thing to highlight. I just want to say again to those at home, the second installment is coming out today. If you have any questions, please contact me; phone my office at 279-2912 and we will answer any questions that we can answer, and get the answers to those that we can, Madam Speaker.

I also want to highlight the presumptive cancer coverage for volunteer and career firefighters. This extended beyond our original election commitment. It gives security to those who are serving and protecting our communities and their families and it gives peace of mind, and that's an important thing.

I was in Come By Chance this past weekend where the Come By Chance volunteer fire department partnered with the Come By Chance Lions Club to host a sensory-friendly parade for

World Autism Day. As many would know, I've said before, the fire chief in Come By Chance is also the president for the provincial association for volunteer firefighters. He has played a leading role in leading training for fire departments, with autism.

Indeed, the Lions Club in Come By Chance has funded a lot of that, and that is a very important fact to note. So to give them the coverage that they deserve, that they require, that they have asked for, for quite some time and didn't get, we were very happy, and I am very proud to have seen that move forward. For those of us who are in the media centre downstairs that day – Doug Cadigan was there, and I will never forget his words, where he said it was a commitment given and a commitment delivered. That is very important.

I also want to highlight the bill on impaired driving, which is something that Members of the House would know I am very passionate about. The Member for Burin – Grand Bank and I have been active with the local chapter of MADD on the Burin Peninsula. It's something that I am very proud that we did. I can tell you, in all sincerity, those kinds of bills that I am talking about here now are the reasons why I offered myself for public office, and I know a lot of other Members were very happy to support those. It will make our roads, our young people and our population safer. Getting behind the wheel while driving under the influence, it is a choice. It is a choice, and I'm very happy our government took steps to curb further impaired driving.

I stood in the gymnasium of Christ the King School in Rushoon at the 10th Annual Cory Kenway Classic, the basketball tournament in memory of Corey Kenway. I said this was a commitment and we would deliver on it, and we have, Madam Speaker.

I also want to highlight the secure withdrawal treatment for youth with addictions. This enables parents who up until now felt helpless. Now they can facilitate another option. How many information sessions did we go to on the Burin Peninsula where drugs have afflicted the lives of so many young people. It's a tragedy, Madam Speaker, it's a tragedy. Parents would be there saying: I feel so helpless, I can't do anything.

This is not the final answer to that problem but it's certainly a tool that can be used, an exercise that previous to this could not be. I think just as it's important to highlight the economic development initiatives that we bring forward, Madam Speaker, it's equally important to highlight the social progress and the files of social value that we're moving along.

Beyond these legislative accomplishments, Madam Speaker, in my own district I am working very hard to make things happen. There is so much potential that I see, and the key now is to harness this potential, to yield its full success. I was very proud recently to have our government announce its commitment to the fluorspar mine in St. Lawrence.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** This is a significant achievement, Madam Speaker, and I know certainly the Member for Burin – Grand Bank has worked very hard on this file. It was on her to-do list and on mine. It's another check on our box, Madam Speaker. I can tell you, I offered any support to her that I could because let no one be confused, St. Lawrence is not in my district but it affects those I represent. It is an employment opportunity and major economic driver for the Burin Peninsula, part of which I represent, from Marystown and most of north of that, with the exception of part of the Fortune Bay East area.

A mentality of the past, Madam Speaker, is to only see what falls within the border of one's own district, but we must think globally. We must look past divisions of the past and support things that make sense to support. We have worked very closely with the Burin Peninsula Chamber of Commerce on industry, on tourism, on shipbuilding, on mining, on aquaculture and there is much more work yet to be done.

I am very much looking forward to the Grieg aquaculture project coming to fruition. I support it, and we need economic development. We need economic diversification, which is something we did not see at all under the previous administration.

As the Premier has often said, the economy we inherited from the previous administration was



one overly dependent on oil and ripe with a culture of overspending in their provincial government. The drop in the price of oil did not create the problem, Madam Speaker, it exposed the problem.

We must diversify this economy if we are to survive the post-oil economy as we await that sector to rebound globally. We see this in our own province with the wind down of Hebron at Bull Arm. There's such a wonderful morale amongst the workers at Bull Arm. I've been there, I've visited there, I've toured the facility and I'll be there again in the coming weeks. I can tell you they have done an outstanding job. They have stayed safe for many, many hours out there, Madam Speaker, and it's something I'm very proud of.

I want to go back to diversification because it's extremely important. Aquaculture performed in a safe, environmentally sound manner is a way to enable this diversification. The shipyard in Marystown is also another terrific potential for growth. This is a more challenging file for us as Members on the Burin Peninsula because it's a private company that owns it, but I can tell you we are, and I am, as engaged as possible on this file. Any role government can play to move the sale of that project along, we will be there to support it.

My colleagues, the Member for Burin – Grand Bank and the Member for Terra Nova, continue to work closely on this file together. Madam Speaker, I am not afraid to adopt a team approach. That is how you get results. Operating in silo does not work. The previous administration is proof of that. Letting boundaries define your work gets you nowhere. We all have to pull on the same oar if we are to get ahead.

So these are three projects, Madam Speaker, the fluorspar mine in St. Lawrence, the Grieg aquaculture project for Placentia Bay, and the Marystown Shipyard that I feel will have a very positive outlook and focus for my district and the entire region. I know there are other challenges as well but we need to focus on the positive, Madam Speaker, rather than the negative. There is much to look forward to and we must continue to look forward and harness those opportunities for success.

I also want to take some time now to mention some specifics from the Speech from the Throne. I was happy to have – in the opening remarks of His Honour's speech – a special mention of our own figure skating champion, Kaetlyn Osmond. She's a tremendous young woman who makes us all proud, and I think I've said as much as I need to say in my Member's statement some two days ago.

The Speech sets out our top priority, jobs. I want to repeat that, Madam Speaker, our top priority is jobs. That is why I am highlighting the Canada Fluorspar, that's why I'm highlighting the Grieg aquaculture, that's why I'm highlighting the Marystown Shipyard. Let there be no mistake where my focus lies. Let there be no mistake where our focus lies as a government, to put people back to work, Madam Speaker, and diversify an economy that for 12 years all it had was oil.

A new Cabinet committee on jobs has been created to foster strong employment conditions and opportunities. This forum will identify new whole of government opportunities for private sector job growth, and to have this lens applied to government decision making is a very welcome step. We know there's tremendous potential and we know there are challenges.

I also wanted to speak while I still have time, Madam Speaker, as it relates to the Come By Chance refinery. This is a very big employer in my district. Of course, there has been concerning news related to employment and layoffs in that area and I can tell you, I stand by the workers and those who have been affected and their families in this difficult time.

Last week, I was very proud after having discussed this and worked with the minister for him to have released all of the safety inspections. Our message to the union, our message to those affected, those who work there, those who live adjacent to it, is to pour through those safety inspections because we want to ensure that any concerns are addressed or allayed as a result of them because there's nothing more important than safety, Madam Speaker.

I also want to highlight the fishery, because it's so important to my district. The Fisheries

Advisory Council is being formed as we work to achieve a successful transition to ground fish. We will continue investments in new technology, research and marketing activity by industry players through the Seafood Innovation and Transition Program.

I was very happy to be in Arnold's Cove recently, Madam Speaker, at Icewater Seafoods, the leading ground fish processing plant in the province, to deliver \$100,000 in funding out of the Seafood Innovation and Transition Fund. Minister Judy Foote was also there on behalf of the federal government with \$50,000 for the facility. These are excellent investments to further jobs and expand operations at successful facilities.

We were also there at that time, Madam Speaker, with about \$1.7 million in capital works projects to announce for the area in Arnold's Cove, Come By Chance, and Chance Cove and Southern Harbour. These are very important job creators as well.

The Speech, as I have already mentioned, Madam Speaker, raises expansion of aquaculture. I spoke earlier of the Grieg project for Placentia Bay. This will result in hundreds, potentially over 1,000 jobs in the construction phase, and in the processing and operating phases will employ hundreds. This will be a welcomed shot in the arm to the Placentia Bay economy.

Our government, as part of *The Way Forward*, intends to work with the industry to increase the 22,000 metric tons of salmon it produced in 2015 to 50,000 metric tons annually. The mussel industry is also estimated to have the capacity to grow to 10,750 metric tons of production annually. This will create jobs. We will not relax nor relent on the regulations and rigorous criteria with which companies must meet in order to maintain site applications and licences in the Newfoundland and Labrador agriculture licensing system.

Madam Speaker, we have much to be hopeful for. We have much to look forward to. So long as I am the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue, I will not allow negativity to set in and I will not allow my focus to be taken off the ball.

Madam Speaker, we will persevere and we will prevail.

Thank you.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster):** The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. PARSLEY:** Madam Speaker, I'm so thankful to be able to stand in this House today and address the recent Throne Speech. After my colleague just before me, I don't know what else I got left to say. He's covered an awful lot of bills that was in mine, but I'll carry on and try to speak about the great things that are happening in my district and in the Province of Newfoundland.

It has outlined a number of initiatives that's been undertaken by the government and it also will outline a number of initiatives that will form part of our province's planning going forward.

Before I get into a few things, I would just like to talk about something. On Saturday night past, Madam Speaker, I attended the Ice Show in CBS and let me tell you the calibre of skaters – Elvis Stojko was present – from probably three- to four-year-olds right up, and to think about the role model that Kaetlyn Osmond is, it was phenomenal to see the potential that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador. To look at that arena, it's probably one of the best in the world and it was such an enjoyable night. It was jammed packed.

So we talk about things in our province, well, these are just some of the little things that people take for granted; but let me tell you it costs money, it costs everything and people have the interest now to go and be able to, from the time a child is 3½, four, put him in every facility that we're able to, and that impacts on their adult life.

There were a lot of good things contained in the Throne Speech and our *Way Forward* plan which is welcome news for our province. Most of the things addressed in the speech have been talked about as part of *The Way Forward*

strategy, which government released six months ago.

Our vision for sustainability and growth is all about taking action. In the first six months, we have produced a report card so the people of our province can see how we're doing in our plans; 39 different actions are addressed in the report on *The Way Forward* and 33 of them have been completed at this time.

We promised a launch into the municipal leasing program for Crown lands, and that's something that I'm very interested in. As a municipal leader, for years we fought to have Crown lands. With the young farmers that are coming about – I know in CBS it's the farmland for the whole province, but just recently on the way up to Holyrood you'll notice small, little groups selling vegetables on Saturdays and Sundays, and these are young farmers between the ages of 20 and 30.

Just over this past summer, I stopped and bought some vegetables and was asking a few questions. Apparently, one of them was a teacher and decided to go back into farming part time. They're doing so well with it. They're going to make it a career, and their children were there with them working on a Saturday and Sunday. It's so great to see in our province. So the Crown lands are great – great for the district, great for my district especially from Harbour Main to North River, Holyrood, Seal Cove.

We promised to create a new Fisheries Advisory Council to help growth in this essential industry in our province. That's all been done, Madam Speaker, and there is a lot more to come. We promised to release a multi-year infrastructure plan; this has been done and will have a huge impact on my district.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to economic initiatives to grow our economy and create jobs, the Throne Speech and *The Way Forward* both addresses this need. In fact, the Throne Speech is specific that jobs will be the top priority of this government. A new Cabinet committee is being put together to address one major issue; how to create more private sector jobs – and it starts now. This is a positive response to the challenges we face in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Government is also planning to make the fishing industry the centerpiece of our economic development strategy; aquaculture will form part of this. Government hopes to increase salmon production from 22,000 metric tons to 50,000 metric tons annually. It will mean thousands of jobs and a real investment in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

We're seeking an expansion in the mining activity, which is going to be worth \$2.9 million this year. Oil and gas continues to be a strong industry for us, even though prices are down but prices will rise again. Tourism also continues to be a bright economic light for Newfoundland and Labrador. This industry is worth over \$1 million to us annually. In *The Way Forward* we're planning to increase the value to \$1.6 million.

Speaking of tourism, Madam Speaker, there are lots of wonderful things in our province, and I'd like to talk about my district for a moment. The Holyrood Squid Jigging Festival, just the other day the lineup was announced for July; major people coming in; people are excited. Summer, hopefully, is coming – spring got to come first. But people are excited about this. The Blueberry Festival in Brigus, which brings thousands and thousands of dollars to the area; and then we come to Cupids, where John Guy first landed, the Legacy Centre, the archeological dig, which myself and the Minister of Tourism attended last year and actually watched a lot of the schoolchildren there do a dig.

When we talk about tourism, it brings an awful lot of money into our district. When we think back, we think of Team Gushue who made us so proud this year, and who is now – as far as I know from yesterday – still winning in Alberta. People are excited about him. He is bringing new excitement to the province, just like I mentioned Kaetlyn Osmond.

Newfoundland and Labrador has so much potential. It starts in the early years and that's what we have to do; we have to have hope. We have to have hope for our children. We don't want our children to be in debt. We don't want our grandchildren to be in debt. We want them to be able to go to school, attend university and come out with clear minds to be able to

challenge whatever they want to do in life and bring some of the visions forward.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas of primary concern for me in our province is health care. While we seem to spend more money on health care than anyone else, the outcomes we get are not the best. We have to change this somehow. Our government is going to do a lot in the next 18 months to do that.

In our Phase 2 document entitled *Realizing our Potential* there are a number of initiatives to be undertaken: expanding primary health care across the province; improving the use of technology and the delivery of health care to our rural province (inaudible); implement a centralized ambulance dispatch centre; implement healthy living assessments for seniors to keep seniors healthy at home for as long as possible. And there has been work done this year with the seniors. The money that's about to come out today – I've had calls last night: Is the money going to be in the bank tomorrow? People are depending on it. It's a source. It's been a long winter, long power bills, heavy. Seniors are finding it hard, but we are trying to make it better. When I told people last night that tomorrow the cheque is supposed to be released, people are happy about that. We have to be happy about something in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Implementing living assessments for seniors, to keep them healthy, to keep them at home as long as possible – and that is so important. We have a number of long-term care facilities. But if we can keep one senior out of 10 in their home, that makes a family happy. Once you go into a long-term care facility – sometimes you have no choice. But once you go in there, it's on a route for another path. So let's do everything we can to keep seniors happy.

Most important to me is our government's commitment to improving and expanding mental health services in our province by adopting the recommendations of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health. Madam Speaker, congratulations are in order to the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions that was just completed. Mental illness, as we all know, it is so important to have healthy minds in our young adults. I know this. It comes within my family.

We celebrated World Autism Day on Monday, and my colleague here in the House and I chatted.

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

**MS. PARSLEY:** It's not about wearing a blue ribbon on Monday. Every day in the life of a child is a day with autism. Every day that you get up in the morning has its different challenges. Let me tell you, our school system is phenomenal. We have a grandson in grade 10, and there's not a moment in that school that he is not taken care of, chatted about, emails and we got the supports there. So when we say that our schools are not working, I can speak that they are. He can go off to school every morning and we know if a problem arises that day, the people there in that school, the teachers, the student assistants are there to help.

Like I said, it's not just a day to wear a blue ribbon, a day to talk about it. It's like Bell Let's Talk Day on mental health – I also have a son with schizophrenia. I am not afraid to say it. But I have spent the last year and a half at the Waterford. And to walk through those corridors every day and to see these young people, mental health, addictions, whatever they may be, exercising in a room, probably lifting their beds – no exercise equipment. That's why I'm glad that this government is committed to a new mental health institution. We need it.

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

**MS. PARSLEY:** The staff there are phenomenal, but they can only do so much. Like I said, it's been a challenge to walk these steps of a building that was built in the 1800s and to see the dark corridors and the dark side of mental illness. Let me tell you, it's no pretty picture.

Every day that you walk in there and you walk out, you have to realize how important it is to have a healthy mind. You can have everything else healthy but if your mind is not healthy, your body doesn't work the same. Let me tell you as far as I know, my Opposition over there – I first meet the Member for St. John's Centre a few years ago when she started at St. Teresa's Parish in a little room and we were one of the people there that night. We were there trying to get help

for my son because there was no help. The only help was to bring him to the Waterford and let me tell you that's not a choice any parent wants to make.

So in order to make Newfoundland and Labrador whole, a healthy place for our children, we have to have healthy systems in schools; we have to keep drugs out – that's why we have the All-Party Committee. It starts there. It doesn't start at 18 or 20; it starts at grade seven, eight and nine when kids go in and get exposed to things they shouldn't.

We have some good things in our province. Just recently on Friday the 13th – I will share an experience with you; I'm going to talk about the RNC for a moment. I had a minor car accident and a heart attack at the scene. I was so worried about the other person that day in the car that hit me; I was trying to console her. But the RNC were too busy trying to get me in an ambulance to get me to a hospital. They offered to take my car, which they did later on that afternoon and drop it to a parking lot. I mean, what RNC worries about your car; they just get it towed away.

But that's the kind of calibre of people we have in Newfoundland and Labrador and we seem to forget the good things. We focus on the bad and let me tell you, doom and gloom is not the situation here. We need to focus on the good.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Hope and hard work.

**MS. PARSLEY:** Hard work.

I came into this House of Assembly. I was a former mayor. I had those challenges I just talked about, while my late husband died. Instead of me and him spending hours together on a Wednesday or Thursday night before he died, we were trying to put the town's finances in order. We worried about how much money we had; where the next project was going to come from.

Those last moments should have been spent with us, but the commitment that we both made was about our town, Harbour Main. Let me tell you, anybody who comes in through this door and don't worry about their constituents got it all wrong. Because our constituents elected us; they

voted us in; they put their faith and hope in us to come here and do a good job. If we don't fight for them, who do we fight for?

Getting back to my speech, I will just touch on a few more things. I come from a great district. I come with strength and determination. It takes strength and determination to get out of bed each day and face the challenges that I have, but I come in here and I put my job first, and my job is my job. My colleagues even on the other side, I had phone calls the day after my car accident asking me if they could help me, and my colleagues here have been phenomenal. They fitted it in every day, every other day, asking me do I need to be here; is there anything they can help me with. We're a team here and if we're not a team, we're nothing.

I came in under the leadership of Dwight Ball and I have worked hard. I think I canvassed 9,000 homes in my district with six seniors, no young people, no young Liberals. We got up every morning and we had Tim Horton's kind of our block seat there but, at the end of the day, we did our job. And I was lucky enough to be elected to this House, to fight for the people of my district and I will fight as long as I'm here. Let me tell you if we need something, I will fight for it. There'll be no stone left unturned.

So I think we have to kind of get down to the point of running our province, looking at *The Way Forward* plan, the next five-year plan will take us – hopefully, there's a budget delivered here tomorrow. After this budget, we're going to all move on and hopefully it will be a little bit of good news in it. I can't say – the Finance Minister knows what's in it, but we will move on with a brighter future.

When you see athletes like Brad Gushue, Kaetlyn Osmond and more to come, Newfoundland and Labrador has a place in history.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**MS. PERRY:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to start out I guess with echoing some of the words of my colleague for the District of Harbour Main. First and foremost, we have been elected by our constituents to represent our constituents. As I elaborate on Address in Reply, I'm going to come back to that point because I think it's a crucial point and I think it's something that, as MHAs, each and every one of us should never forget.

I know I've been here since 2007 and never once did I put party above my district. Always, the people of my district come first. If that's to my own peril, so be it; the people come first, that's what I've been elected to do, and I truly hope that should we have a repeat of last year's budget, that Members opposite will stand up this time on behalf of their constituents, Madam Speaker, because we certainly didn't see that happen last year.

Our province has never had such a hard time as it has in the last 12 months, since the 1990s, the last time when a Liberal government was in power. It has been such a hard year.

I have, in my 10 years as being an MHA, never experienced such a high volume of calls from people who are genuinely experiencing true hardship. Most of it brought on because of the regressive policies and measures introduced in *Budget 2016*, which many of us are hoping we are going to see reversed in tomorrow's budget, Madam Speaker.

One in particular that comes to mind that is affecting every person who owns a vehicle and every business that's out there, particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, being the gas tax. We were told at the time it would be reviewed every six months, and if the price of oil went up, the gas tax would be eliminated. We have not seen that review of six months. We have seen the price of oil increase. So I, for one, am truly hoping that at the very least we will see gas tax reversed tomorrow. I certainly would like to see a lot more of the regressive measures reversed, Madam Speaker.

I didn't mean to start there today when I got up. I wanted to talk a little bit about the wonderful, fine people of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** They are great people.

**MS. PERRY:** They are great people, I tell you, and there are great people all across Newfoundland and Labrador. When we experience hardship and tragedies, I like to refer to the expression: When the going gets tough, the tough get going, and I've seen that in spades in the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

When we looked last year at the budget, there was \$30 million set aside for contingency of a natural disaster. During the filibuster, I was probably one of the ones who criticized that the most. Lo and behold, did I have not one but two significant tragedies in my district shortly thereafter. At the same time, the \$30 million contingency was eliminated and put back into current account. I'm still baffled by that, but we are working through, and the federal government was able to come to our aid through the Disaster Relief Program. Unfortunately, the result of the disaster has led to expensive tens of millions of dollars.

I was just looking the other night – we talk about ferries. I have three communities in my district that are isolated and accessible only by ferry or chopper, and it's quite a struggle, particularly this time of year. If the ferry breaks down and it's bad weather, the chopper is not getting in either to get people out. It's a great worry. If someone is about to give birth or if someone is sick and has a heart attack or a brain aneurism, very, very serious concerns.

When I hear things, Madam Speaker, like Newfoundland has the highest cost per capita in health care, yes, so we do but you know what? That's the one sector I would never, never compromise. There is never a price you can put on people's lives. We are a relatively, sparsely populated Island spread over a large geographic area and so our health care costs are going to be higher, and so they should be, because our people deserve nothing less than the best of health care. Now if we want to do more to achieve better outcomes, absolutely, but let's not cut health care for the sake of saving dollars when people's lives are at stake.

Getting back again to the people of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. I want to throw out a bouquet to them, before I leave this part of what I wanted to speak about today, for the unwavering support they gave to each other. I represent 21 communities spread over 11,000 kilometres, what I felt during both tragedies was that we were very much one community. Everyone came together.

The fire departments from all areas descended upon us, came to our aid during the fires we had in January, hats off to each and every one of them. It was a very, very worrisome time for all of us, very dangerous time for all of us. We had two fires actually prior to the arson incident. A week before there was a building in the Town of St. Alban's that housed three businesses, a taxation business, a computer shop and a carpentry shop. All three of those businesses were lost seven days prior to losing our school, our RCMP building and our town hall in Milltown.

I was talking to a friend of mine who was watching the firemen at work. She was saying, oh, they're going in now. The firemen were going in on their hands and knees and someone was holding their feet as they were going in to look around and make sure there were no people in there and everyone was okay. Just to hear the description, it was really hard to listen to. All I could think about was the wives and the children of these firemen who were out there putting their lives at risk to try and save the building and the houses nearby. They did a fabulous job, no other houses were lost.

When it came to the fires we had a week later, they came for two days. Firemen from all over the coast came for two days. A lot of them lost a lot of their equipment during that fight because it was 48 hours at least that they were spraying and the weather wasn't on our side at the time. Hats off to the Department of Municipal Affairs who are helping us out with some of the equipment we lost; hats off to everybody involved and kudos to all of you.

In terms of the flood that happened, Hurricane Matthew, we're still dealing with the roads. We did manage to get ourselves back in service and able to get from one community to another, but a significant amount of roadwork does need to be

done and repairs this summer to get us back to where we were. The bridge in St. Alban's is completely gone. Now that it's over, one of my fond memories is always going to be that rowboat that became the St. Alban's ferry for five days. We can all look back now and be quite proud of what we've done.

I'm going to use that analogy of our strength to compare it to how we, as a people, are dealing with the budget. What we've seen, unfortunately, since last year's budget is a huge drop in our population again. For the first time in 10 years – we had a report last year on June 29, 2016, released by the Fraser Institute that showed the first drop in our population due to out-migration in almost 10 years. I was so upset to see that, Madam Speaker, because of all the work and all the strides we had taken since the early 2000s to rebuild confidence in ourselves as a people and to try and encourage people to come back to Newfoundland and Labrador and make this their home.

With the regressive taxation measures, Madam Speaker, many people just can't afford to live here. They leave for greener pastures, they build their homes, they have their children and they don't come back. So I truly, truly, truly hope – and I'll probably say this about 10 times during my speech – that some of these regressive measures will be reversed in tomorrow's budget because they clearly have not created a better tomorrow. They clearly have not laid a foundation for a stronger Newfoundland and Labrador. They have destroyed people's confidence in themselves. To hear a lack of confidence in what our people can do, it is very disheartening.

I strongly believe, Madam Speaker, that our entrepreneurs in Newfoundland and Labrador are some of the best anywhere. I know we have people, even from my rural, remote area, that work in places like Nassau. That work in some of the largest companies we have internationally throughout the world, because we do have the capability. We do have the intelligence and we can become a stronger province, Madam Speaker, but we need people to believe, and particularly our leadership to believe.

When it comes to the private sector, there's no better way to stifle the private sector than to

burden them with unreasonable taxation, which is exactly what has happened through *Budget 2016*. I go back, when the House of Assembly closes, to my district and every time that I come back to St. John's, I see another closure sign. I see another business, another restaurant, that's shut down; another retail outlet that just can't make it anymore because the fees and taxes are so prohibitive. People are not spending money because they don't know where their next pay cheque is going to come from.

That has to stop, Madam Speaker. We as a people in the House of Assembly, in particular, have a responsibility to build confidence in our people, to let them know that we are very confident that they have the ability to turn things around.

It's really unfortunate that the measures of *Budget 2016* are going to take years to recover from – they truly are. The damage that was imposed was devastating. To see that we are the only province in the country facing a recession is unbelievable. What baffles me – and I try sometimes to differentiate between left of centre, right of centre, middle of centre. I think a lot of political parties over the last few decades have operated primarily in the middle of centre, with some left policies and some right policies.

I think our former premier, Danny Williams, used to call himself him a left Conservative because he was very much supportive of the social policies as well. I think we all need to have a healthy balance of that. But when I look to what's happening with the federal government in Ottawa, where in December of 2015 the national government ran a surplus of \$3 billion and then in December of 2016, under a new Liberal government, ran a deficit of \$18 billion, I'm saying how, in the month of December, did we spend \$21 billion more than we did in 2015. I'm still baffled by it.

I see a stark contrast to the approach of a Liberal government in Ottawa, which has said we're going to spend our way out of this recession, to the Liberal government in Newfoundland saying we're going to tax you, tax you, and tax you, and that's how we're going to get our revenue and whatever happens, happens. People are leaving us in droves; businesses are shutting down left, right and centre; the young ones are saying

we're not going to stay here and there's no life for us here. I think it's absolutely terrible, Madam Speaker.

To that end, I personally would like to see recall legislation. It was not what was promised to the people. No taxes under our watch – and lo and behold, what did we see? Tax after tax after tax; fee after fee after fee – 300 new fees, and a levy. My God, what in heaven's name was that levy all about?

People are now completing their tax returns and they're seeing the impact of that levy on their incomes, and no one is happy about it at all. I truly hope that as the oil monies come back and as the money starts to get thrown around and projects start to happen in the next two or three years, as we get closer to an election, that people don't forget what we were put through, unnecessarily, last year. There was absolutely no need of those regressive measures. I do believe we're going to see reversals of them because I do believe they are now enlightened and they see that they've actually contracted our economy to an unacceptable level.

I have so many things I want to talk about and we're quickly running out of time. So I want to touch as well on Muskrat Falls. I was so happy – so happy – to hear the truth finally be spoken at the Nalcor AGM last week. I was so happy to read the annual report that shows this is a viable project, Muskrat Falls, and we, as a people, will not have to rely on oil because we have water that flows. As long as that water flows over the great Churchill, there is money to be made for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We only have to look at Quebec and to see the success that they have had; our \$1 billion to their \$80 billion. Do you know what? 2041 is not so very far away. My biggest fear – my biggest fear – is that there was every effort being made to convince people that the project was a bad one and lo and behold we're going to have to sell it. But we as a people will never stand to see our assets, our natural resources, our renewable natural resources that can provide us with revenue for hundreds and hundreds of years – we will not stand by and allow those assets to be sold. They belong to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and it will be the



people of Newfoundland and Labrador who will benefit.

It is so great to know that the Liberals are finally admitting that rates will not double because of Muskrat Falls. Now, as one of my colleagues spoke about yesterday, our leader spoke about yesterday, it sounds good. It really helped you in your election platform, no doubt, to say rates are going to double, but it wasn't true.

The fear mongering that you have done to the people and seniors is absolutely terrible. The excess sales from this project, Madam Speaker, we know, can be used to reduce the rates. The return on investment of an 8.8 per cent equity stake, we know, can be used to lower the rates. The money we're saving on the loan guarantee, we know, can be used to lower the rates. So everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador needs to know it was never true –

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS. PERRY:** – that rates were going to double. This project, when we see new hospitals, and when we see new schools, and when we are able to cut one heck of a deal with Quebec – because come 2041, we own all the power and we're not going to get weak in the next 20 years and cave. We're not going to allow that to happen in this province. We're going to stand tall. We're confident in what we can do as a people. We're confident in our resources. We're confident that we have business people and the business acumen to make this work, Madam Speaker, and we're going to make it work on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**MS. PERRY:** So I'm quickly running out of time. I did want to say before I wrap up here today that it is great to be here in the House of Assembly and it is great to have the support of your colleagues, especially when times get rough. My good friend from Cape St. Francis, in particular, is always here. When we have a rough day, he'll always say, tomorrow is a better day.

We have never given up on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have never lost confidence in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will continue to fight on their behalf and we'll continue to stand up for them each and every day in this House of Assembly. When we're no longer here in the House of Assembly, I, for one, will continue to support the initiatives of all future governments. Whether the government is a Progressive Conservative government or Liberal government or NDP government, I, for one, will applaud measures that I think are in the best interests of the people.

I'll have no problem standing up and applauding those, which is why today I stand up and criticize *Budget 2016* because I think it was terrible. I truly hope that Members opposite in Cabinet will make the right decisions and bring down a better budget tomorrow that reverses the gas tax; a budget that reverses some of the impacts on seniors; that puts some of the money back into the seniors' pockets that you took; that reverses the hike on insurance; and that re-instills the business confidence in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador so people do continue to invest.

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

**MS. PERRY:** What in heaven's name? Where do you ever see a premier, or leaders, condemning the people of the province and saying she's all doom and gloom? Don't expect anyone else to have confidence in us if we don't have confidence in ourselves.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS. PERRY:** Well, I'm here to say that we on this side of the House very much have confidence in ourselves and we very much have confidence in the future. We'll ride this storm and we'll come out better at the end of the day, I have no doubt, Madam Speaker.

Back to constituents; first and foremost, we were brought to this House of Assembly to represent their views. We have no obligation to any party. We have an obligation to the people that we serve, and if we stand up as individual MHAs

the people of this province will be better off for it.

I'm quickly running out of time; I've only got a few seconds left. Hats off to all of you for trying to make a difference. Hats off to the people who stand behind us. Newfoundland and Labrador is on its way to a better place and Muskrat Falls is certainly a part of the solution that's going to ensure we have a great future for decades and decades and decades to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay.

**MR. WARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to stand up here and represent the beautiful District of Baie Verte – Green Bay, to quote my hon. Member across the way from Cape St. Francis.

Before I get into a few remarks – because, Madam Speaker, it looks like I'm between this House and our lunch hour, but I'll try and make them short and to the point.

I wanted to get a couple of housekeeping orders in place, and that is we all depend greatly on our good CAs and EAs. I certainly wanted to wish my CA a happy vacation. She's leaving the snow filled area of Springdale today, I guess, to head off to the Dominican Republic, and I wanted to welcome Adrian Canning who will be her replacement in her absence.

I want to take an opportunity, Madam Speaker, to say thank you. I was on my way to the House of Assembly Monday morning in the freezing rain and snow that we encountered on Sunday night and early Monday. I had the opportunity to hit a snowdrift on the Conception Bay bypass road, and certainly I want to say kudos and thanks very much to the gentleman who stopped and plucked me from the drift. Again, we all have stories about good Samaritans, and us as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we certainly lead the way in this beautiful country that we live in.

Just on a personal note, I know my father is probably watching this morning. I had an experience with my father last night; we had to rush him in an ambulance to the hospital. So, Dad, if you are looking, I certainly hope you're feeling much better this morning. It was a last night for us all, Madam Speaker. Anyway, I hope he is on to a healthier day.

Madam Speaker, I got up and spoke a couple of weeks ago –

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order please!

**MR. WARR:** I got up and spoke a couple of weeks ago and I read a quote. I'm going to read it again, and I may read it every time I get up. I was accused by the leader of the Third Party of lecturing. I am not in the lecturing business, but I do believe in the quote: to produce a healthy province is to realize that success depends on us as a people possessing a real willingness to change and a desire to fight for success.

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

**MR. WARR:** I believe in that quote, Madam Speaker. Again, it's a quote that I will continue to read every time I rise in this hon. House.

Madam Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity – as I know my good friend from Stephenville – Port au Port will be doing a little later – and that is to remember the Abbott family in Port au Port who had a devastating fire of an old family business of 132 years, known as Abbott and Haliburton in the wonderful community of Port au Port on the West Coast.

I say that, Madam Speaker, because Bill Abbott, who is the owner of that business, is a personal friend of mine. We go back a long way, because I come from an old family business as well. That fire devastated that community, devastated that business, that old business. It's not about the four walls and the roof that we think about today. It's the family heirlooms, all the old papers and documentation of 132 years since that business has been established. I want to wish Bill and his family much success in the rebuilding of that business.

While we are talking about fires, I just heard the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune speak about the devastating fires in her communities just a few short months ago. I happened to touch base with that Member during those devastating times to offer support, and I know they took advantage of our offer. We had two schools that had shut down in the District of Baie Verte – Green Bay; actually, one on Long Island and one on Little Bay Island. So we offered some school equipment and I'm glad they took advantage of that.

Madam Speaker, Address in Reply, talking about the Speech from the Throne. Obviously, I wanted to reference *The Way Forward* program, the three phases of *The Way Forward* program: securing our future, realizing our potential and building our future.

Madam Speaker, I pride myself on being a good listener. I just want to highlight some comments from the Throne Speech, and those comments were made by the hon. Member for Topsail – Paradise, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned multiple times that our government does not have a plan, stating that our government is moving the province backward and not forward. This is a bit of a rich comment coming from the Leader of the Opposition whose government not only never tabled their infrastructure plan – meaning the public had no accountability in where their taxpayer dollars were going – they never had a plan to move the province forward beyond hoping that the price of the oil would rebound and it would become 2009 again.

The PC administration had no real plan for Newfoundland and Labrador beyond their poorly thought out legacy project of Muskrat Falls, which the hon. Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune had just referred to, which not only did nothing to diversify the economy of the province, but left our people in excessive debt due to the lack of planning and foresight.

I also heard the Leader of the Opposition mention, Madam Speaker, that the Liberal electoral platform was a magic wish book of ideas that never would come to fruition. However, he neglects to mention that in *Budget 2015*, under the PC administration, it was also a

magic wish book of wishing their independence on oil and lack of diversification for the economy for 12 years under their rule would not be revealed. We've changed that, Madam Speaker. We talked about releasing the public accounts certainly in election years and prior to the election.

The Leader of the Opposition also stated numerous times of what he had called a great relationship with the federal government, when Newfoundland and Labrador had actually lost more than it gained. This is not true, and the relationship with the federal government is a welcome change from being neglected for 12 years due to a government that was unwilling to put its ego aside and actually co-operate with its federal counterparts.

Newfoundland and Labrador has received significant funding through the federal government, Madam Speaker, and there's more to come. Unlike the previous administration, which made funding announcements in secret, hoping the public would not notice that there was only one signature on their agreements with the federal government. I state that again in reference to his comments to the Throne Speech, and I sort of took some exception to those comments.

Over the course of the last few months, we've heard the Official Opposition and Members from the Third Party probably talking about the equalization funding to Newfoundland and Labrador. A little bit of a background on equalization, for those who are listening at home: The federal government makes equalization payments to less wealthy Canadian province to equalize the province's fiscal capacity and their ability to generate tax revenues. Equalization payments are based on a formula that calculates the difference between per capita revenue yield that a particular province would obtain using tax average rates, and the national average per capita revenue yield at average tax rates.

The current formula considers five major revenue sources. The objective of the program is to ensure that all provinces have access to per capita revenues equal to the potential of the average of all 10 provinces. The formula is based solely on revenues and does not consider

the cost of providing services or the expenditure needs of the provinces.

Newfoundland and Labrador gained a so-called have statues for the first time in its history, Madam Speaker, in 2008 which put an end to equalization, largely the result of revenues from oil royalties. Former Premier Danny Williams fought to exclude oil revenues from the equalization formula, claiming the volatility of the prices made it exempt from being subject to equalization.

I bring this up, Madam Speaker, because this government have been blamed with regard to us not asking to be reconsidered for equalization. But I want to talk about the federal assistance to Newfoundland and Labrador since 2016. In 2016, Newfoundland and Labrador had begun repaying the federal government for the \$271 million it was loaned from the federal government for the equalization payments more than a decade ago. The PC government chose not to budget for this cost, despite knowing it had to be repaid and, instead, focused its economic policies on unnecessary expenditures.

Due to the strong relationship, Madam Speaker, held by the provincial Liberal government with the federal government, funding relief has been negotiated to ease some of the burden from this province. In May 2016, the federal government deferred the province's payments under the Equalization Repayable Floor Loan, effective June 1 of that year.

Under the 2005 Equalization Repayable Floor Loan, the province owed \$378 million to the federal government due to overpayments. Beginning in April 2016, the province repaid a further \$4.5 million. Those payments are now suspended until April of 2022. Payments for the outstanding \$267 million under the Equalization Repayable Floor Loan will be recovered in equal monthly, interest-free, I might add, amounts over a 10-year period from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2032.

While this is in not equivalent to equalization payments, easing the economic burden for the province will allow Newfoundland and Labrador to build a stronger province and emerge from this current fiscal situation quicker.

With those few remarks out of the way, Madam Speaker, I just want to turn to my district for a few minutes and talk about the good things that are happening in the wonderful District of Baie Verte – Green Bay. You've all heard my hon. colleague for Labrador West talking about the mining in his district. I was pleased to hear, during his speech in Address in Reply, talking about the mining Centre of Excellence in Lab West. I want to talk about the fact that we have been given some indication that the associate campus for the mining Centre of Excellence will be housed in Baie Verte, which is our mining capital with regard to my district.

I want to talk about the good things that are happening in those mines and where we have been. Mining has historically been and continues to be an important economic driver for this province. It's one of the province's oldest and leading industries, and it's a major contributor to the economy of the province. Mining in our province has its origin on the Baie Verte Peninsula, in the wonderful District of Baie Verte – Green Bay, with the Dorset Soapstone Quarry in Fleur de Lys –

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order please!

**MR. WARR:** – showing pre-European use of the geographical resources of the province.

The first major mining development for Newfoundland began in Tilt Cove, again in our district, in 1864. We've got a rich mining history. With the two operating mines on the Baie Verte Peninsula that was referred to by the Minister of Natural Resources in her speech to Address in Reply the other day, she talked about the good things are that happening at Anaconda Mining and Rambler Metals and Mining. I'm not going to belabour that issue because we've talked about how important this is and where we see things going.

I'll tell you the highlight for me, Madam Speaker, is that we have 400-plus people on the Baie Verte Peninsula who are associated in the mining industry. I know with regard to that industry, we're looking at an average age of these people at 40 years old. I mean, at 40 years old it tells me that there's a wonderful future for

these young people, young experienced miners who normally had to probably leave the province to go off for work. Now they have the opportunity to stay at home, work at home, raise their families where they want to in the beautiful Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to talk a bit, Madam Speaker, about the aquacultural projects. We talk about it in *The Way Forward* program supporting growth annually, especially for mussels. We're going to grow the mussel production to 10,750 metric tons in *The Way Forward* document. We have four processors in our district. I'm not going to highlight each one of them, but I just wanted to highlight – we all talk about secondary processing and how important it is to have secondary processing within our province. We have a plant that just opened in the community of Triton. Right now, we're looking at employment of anywhere between 20 and 30 people, but it's a secondary processing plant and they're going to use about 1.3 million pounds of blue mussels.

Obviously, Madam Speaker, that goes right into where we are again with *The Way Forward* program. It's a viable project. I had the Minister of Fisheries ready to come to the district actually, Madam Speaker, and he got waylaid because of the weather. But certainly, he wants to take the opportunity to visit the district and visit these mussel harvesters in our district. I'm encouraged by his enthusiasm, as well as the enthusiasm of the people that are associated with that industry.

Madam Speaker, I just want to again, while I'm speaking about the Minister of Fisheries – and I've had several conversations with my good friend and colleague for Cape St. Francis on the seal industry. I've had the opportunity to take the minister of BTCRD to a community in my district, Fleur de Lys.

In Fleur de Lys, we have a seal plant that's open there. Again, Madam Speaker, 20 to 25 jobs and they had to shut down because of the closure of the seal hunt because of the young being born, the whelping patch. We had many meetings with the owners of that plant and through our federal colleagues and Minister LeBlanc and with the Premier and the Minister of Fisheries when there were in Boston, had conversations with the

minister, and we were able to get that plant open again.

I'm certainly very grateful and thankful for the opportunity to play a part in that. Again, I applaud and thank my hon. colleague across because he was onside with us as well. He is the Fisheries critic and, like I said, I had the pleasure of working with him on this.

Madam Speaker, we got a quota this year of 450,000 seals. We won't take 75,000 seals – we are all reminded each day by the Member and certainly in the news, both on the TV and the radio and print, about what's happening with the shellfish industry. Yes, the price of crab is up, but the quota has been cut.

When we look at the shrimp fishery as well – because that picture was caught in my district of a seal with 181 female crabs in the gut of the seal and those female crabs can produce up to 2,000 eggs. So when you look at the devastation, we're looking at 342,000 crabs. You talk about what's happening in the industry, it's pure devastation. So it's great to see that industry opened up again.

I see, Madam Speaker, that my time has elapsed. I'll take the opportunity to get up again and take my seat.

Thank you for the time.

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

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I would suggest now, given the hour of the day, that with the consent of my colleagues that we recess until 2 p.m.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** This being Wednesday, Private Members' Day, this House now stands in recess until 2 p.m.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

We'd like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery today, Mr. Roland Card and his wife Helen Card. Roland is the Potentate of the Mazol Shriners.

Welcome.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** We also welcome to the Speaker's gallery, members of The Singing Legionnaires, including their Director of Music William Green, Accompanist Clyde Johnston and President James Healey.

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

#### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** For Members' statements today we have the Members for the Districts of St. John's Centre; Baie Verte – Green Bay; Virginia Waters – Pleasantville; Fogo Island – Cape Freels; Conception Bay East – Bell Island; and Labrador West.

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

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

The Singing Legionnaires are celebrating 50 years – and there is much to celebrate!

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Founded in 1967, today's group includes original World War II veterans, men who served in the Korean War, UN Peacekeepers and folks from several Royal Canadian Legion branches.

The joyous voices of these amazing men bring their repertoire of songs from the World Wars and old standards from the 1920s to the 1960s to the veterans at the DVA Pavilion, folks in nursing homes, civic functions, flag raising ceremonies right here at Confederation Building, provincial and national conventions and more.

Many of us have seen them braving the frigid cold at the War Memorial for November 11

Remembrance Day ceremonies and the blistering heat of July 1 Beaumont-Hamel commemorations. They lead us in song during these most solemn of occasions, moving our hearts and our souls. In the weeks leading to November 11, they are also incredibly busy singing at school and church services of remembrance, teaching our youth about peace.

They enjoy the benefits of singing together. It provides cherished camaraderie and confidence in social development.

I ask all Members to join me in celebrating and thanking The Singing Legionnaires for their years of generous service. Bravo!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Green Bay.

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

I rise today to acknowledge Todd Clance from La Scie. Todd is a 42-year-old resident of my district who suffers from epilepsy and cerebral palsy. Despite these challenges, he is both ambitious and a dreamer. One of his big dreams was to attend the Brier in St. John's. Yes, he's a big Team Gushue fan.

Mr. Speaker, Todd not only attended the Brier for a full week; he was treated like a VIP by locals and visitors alike, and built a lasting friendship with Brad Gushue and his team.

I want to say thank you to everyone who supported Todd's dream. When he returned home, the people of La Scie did something for Todd no one expected. They gave him a motorcade through the town and they hosted a party in his honour.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Team Gushue, the people of our province and especially the people of La Scie for making Todd's dream a reality. I am honoured and humbled to represent such good-hearted people in this House.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Todd and thanking the people of

our province for the kindness and spirit of generosity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I rise today to recognize two great people from the district who will lead the Mazol Shriners charitable organization throughout 2017.

Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending the official installation of the illustrious Sir Roland Card and Lady Helen Card as Potentate and First Lady last January. Roland and Helen now lead the provincial Shriners organization that is well known for achieving great things with respect to helping children with orthopedic needs, burns, cleft lip and palate conditions, as well as spinal cord injuries.

In 2016, Mazol Shriners referred a total of 72 children for 122 appointments to the Shriners Boston burn unit, the Philadelphia spinal cord injury unit and the Shriner's Montreal/Gander facilities – all of which was supported by approximately \$300,000 funding support from Mazol.

Roland and Helen are committed to building on that great work throughout 2017, and have the experience to do it, having spent years leading fundraising activities within the Shriners.

I commend Roland and Helen for their volunteer service to their community, and I ask all hon. Members to join me in wishing them all the best as they lead Mazol Shriners this year.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I take great pride in rising in this hon. House to bring attention to the great volunteer work done by the people of my District of Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

In June of last year, a teacher from Pearson Academy, New-Wes-Valley, was recognized for supporting school sports. Pearson Academy offers a variety of sports from badminton to basketball, ball hockey to volleyball, track and field to cross-country running.

I am delighted to tell hon. Members that Mr. Juan Gill from Newtown, Bonavista Bay, was presented with the School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador Regional Recognition Award for his dedication to the School Sports Program. Mr. Gill has been teaching for over two decades and has taught in Eastport, Glovertown, Trinity and Nunavut.

When asked about his award, Gill said he was just one of many who make the programs work. Students involved in sports learn many life skills, he says. Sports are a great way of teaching communications, leadership, motivation and commitment skills.

Let's thank Juan Gill and all administrators who support student sports programs as organizers, coaches and volunteers. Without their support, after school sports would never be possible.

Thank you, Juan, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It gives me great pleasure to stand and recognize a group of citizens in my district who this past Monday showed ingenuity, creativity, concern, co-operation, courage and community spirit.

Mr. Speaker, I speak of the dozens of citizens who were concerned of the well-being of a pod of dolphins stranded in the ice in Lance Cove Beach – Bell Island. After noticing the stranded animals on Sunday, the residents contacted the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for advice and assistance. They were told assistance could

be days away due to the ice in the bay but to continue to monitor the well-being of the animals.

In the early hours of Monday morning, these same citizens relayed that some of the animals have perished and that a number of other ones were in peril. These individuals showed leadership and began a rescue mission. With constant contact with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the group began the task of one by one removing the animals from the area in which they were stranded and moving them to an area with open water.

By making a make-shift stretcher, a group of residents waded into the ice-covered waters, securing the 500-pound animals to the stretcher, and then putting them in the back of a truck and transporting them to another location where they could be released. This show of heroism saved five of the animals.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking the rescue team of residents on Bell Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Dr. Willie Arsenault, a long-time physician in Labrador West. Dr. Willie first arrived in Labrador West in 1976 as an intern, when residents jokingly said, you'll never be back.

Well, Mr. Speaker, he did return in 1977 and maintained a family practice until his retirement on March 31 of this year, including IOC Company doctor from 1985-2004. To him, patients were not just patients, they were family.

Dr. Willie also had a love for music and flying, and found himself with a pilot's licence even before he could drive. His love for music found him as a member of Labrador Black Spruce where he wrote and performed many songs of the history of Labrador. In fact, he recorded his first song, *Rub-a-Dub-Dub*, while in university.

This past Saturday at his retirement party, he was honoured for 40 years of devotion to his patients, a feat surpassed in Labrador by only one other physician, the famous Sir Wilfred Grenfell who devoted 43 years to the people of Labrador.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking Dr. Willie for his service and wish him well in his retirement on the banks of the Ashuanipi River.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to inform Members and the public that the next payment of the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement, as well as the Enhanced Seniors' Benefit will be issued today, April 5.

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

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** This investment highlights our government's continued support for low-income seniors, individuals, families and persons with disabilities. The programs were both designed to provide the appropriate supports to help protect our citizens, especially in the face of the fiscal circumstances our province is facing, and I am proud that we are able to offer these supports to those who need it most.

Mr. Speaker, direct deposit payments will be made to individuals today, the same day cheques will be sent in the mail. Since its implementation last July, 155,000 individuals and families have benefited from the new Income Supplement and the Enhanced Seniors' Benefit.

I would like to point out that qualified individuals did not need to apply and will



automatically receive these benefits – eligibility is determined based on their 2015 income tax information. Both the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit and the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement will be added to the recipient's GST credit cheque or direct deposit payment.

Mr. Speaker, we understand the challenges our province faces, particularly with a rapidly aging population, and our government has a plan to ensure we are prepared through smarter spending and sustainable investments. A number of these investments such as the Income Supplement and Enhanced Seniors' Benefit are already positively impacting the lives of the people across our province. As a government, we will continue to provide supports to those who need it most.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. The minister is promoting these programs yet again, but she fails to mention that seniors are worse off now than they were before the Liberal government came to power.

The minister did not mention that her Liberal government cancelled the HST rebate which many seniors and low-income families look forward to every year. She also failed to mention they cancelled the Home Heating Rebate and the Residential Energy Efficiency Program which provided needed supports to help seniors heat their homes. The minister also failed to mention the increasing cost of food, the changes to the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program and the removal of the Adult Dental Program.

Mr. Speaker, seniors are not better off under this Liberal government. I ask the minister to provide them relief in tomorrow's budget.

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

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

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

Seniors were hit hard in the last budget with the increases of several fees. The gas tax increase that hit rural seniors especially hard, the tax on insurance and books, the lack of affordable housing, the cancellation of the Home Heating Rebate, the cancellation of the over-the-counter drug program, and the Adult Dental Program.

The minister knows the seniors' benefit is a mere drop in the bucket for seniors who are struggling to make ends meet. More and more of our seniors are slipping into poverty under her government. Let's hope this doesn't happen any further in this upcoming budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I rise today to reiterate our government's continued commitment to working with the early childhood development sector for the benefit of all children and families throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Last week we were pleased to distribute \$6.5 million in annual funding for family resource centres from St. John's to Torngat Mountains. We have approximately 150 centres that offer a variety of community-based activities and resources for early childhood development and parenting support.

The centres provide a friendly and informal setting where families can access programs and resources specifically tailored to their needs, including parent education, interactive parent and child programs and healthy baby clubs.

Our government is dedicated to providing the necessary supports to our children and the early childhood educators who make such an impact on their lives. As announced in the Throne Speech, *Budget 2017* will include further

measures to support early childhood educators and families.

Mr. Speaker, as a government we recognize that family resource centres, early learning and child care play vital roles in the healthy development of children and the well-being of families throughout our great province.

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for an advance copy of his statement. Without a doubt, the family resource centres, early learning and child care are vital to the healthy development to Newfoundland and Labrador's children. These 150 centres have been instrumental in growing the community and benefiting thousands – a fact that was highlighted in February 2013, when the PC government released a 10-Year Child Care Strategy, *Caring for Our Future*.

Family resource centres are one of the many initiatives that account for the overall strategy to reduce poverty in this province – a fact that is clearly lost in the Liberal government. While the Liberal ministers love to make statements about lost opportunities, I will remind the Liberals that in 2015 Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest percentage of the population receiving Social Assistance ever recorded. So while the minister claims that the Liberals –

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** – are making such initiatives a priority, these actions tell a different story.

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. It is important to recognize the great work that family resource centres do. We should build on and enhance what happens at these centres to create quality public child care, which we know from the evidence is vitally important in early childhood development. So this is all the more reason, Mr. Speaker, for us to be working towards a public child care system for all the children of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I'm pleased to rise today to announce that 10 new municipal partners have joined BizPal in this past fiscal year.

Last fall we announce that seven new municipalities had signed on, and today we can add Greenspond, Victoria and Hant's Harbour to that list.

The BizPal program helps local entrepreneurs save time and money by simplifying the process of obtaining permits and licences.

This federal-provincial-territorial online information service is free for entrepreneurs to use and there's no cost to municipalities to sign on as a partner.

Our government recognizes the important role small- and medium-sized businesses play in helping strengthen the economy. BizPal reduces red tape for business, which is a key commitment in *The Way Forward*.

Mr. Speaker, 90 Newfoundland and Labrador municipalities are now partners in this initiative.

I encourage all Members of this House to reach out to municipal leaders in their districts to tell them about the benefits of being a BizPal partner, so we can reach our goal of 100 members this year.

I also encourage municipal leaders across the province to contact Service NL if they would like more information about how BizPal can help them support new ventures in their community.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I want to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see the increased uptake in BizPal registration. It's great to see that 10 new municipal partners have joined this year. It was our government that brought the province into this BizPal initiative.

Any service that can help local entrepreneurs save time and money so that they can grow their business faster is a good thing. We should encourage more of it. I look forward to seeing the service being offered to many more communities in the future.

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 thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Yes, this is good news, but I also would have liked to have heard from the minister more data regarding BizPal and its benefits. The minister says BizPal has saved entrepreneurs time and money.

Give us data on that. What savings has BizPal been able to afford participating organizations?

Does government have a number? How much money has this government cost both levels of federal and provincial?

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this week when people are concerned for the economy, high taxes and the uncertain future of our province, the Liberals want to use their time in the House of Assembly this afternoon to talk about recycling bins at drive-throughs at fast-food chains.

I ask the Premier: On the eve of the provincial budget, with all the issues that are facing the people of the province, is your private Member's resolution on recycling bins at drive-throughs the best you can do?

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

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

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

This coming from a former premier who could care less about the future, could care less about individuals. As an example in Labrador when the province was facing a fisheries crisis, just a few days ago, with shrimp quota reductions and crab quota reductions, this is a former premier, the Leader of the PC Party, that stood up in this House and started talking about something and asking questions about a fixed link in Labrador, which is very important to the people of Labrador.

As a matter of fact, the only reason why there wasn't a resolution from the Combined Councils this year was simply because we had made a commitment to do it – something they wouldn't

do. So he stands in this House today and talks about things that we want to talk about in a private Member's resolution, Mr. Speaker – the gall of the individual to even talk about such matters.

We are concerned about the environment, we are concerned about people in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it's our private Members that will determine what they want to talk about on Wednesday afternoon.

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

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

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

That's a good one; he finally answered a question I asked him two days ago.

Mr. Speaker, last year the Liberals gouged consumers and strangled the economy with hikes in gas tax, insurance tax, income tax, sales tax, book tax – almost every fee imaginable. As a matter of fact, they increased 300 taxes and fees on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

When the Liberals reduce taxes tomorrow, including gas taxes back to where it should have been, how will they undo the damage their year of gouging has cost Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

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

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

Well, in last year's budget of 2016-2017, I think the whole province recognized the mismanagement, the poor planning that we had seen from the previous administration. The PC plan for the future of our province this year would have meant a \$2.7 billion deficit going into the situation that we had inherited last year. So assuming – assuming – that the former premier, the Leader of the PC Party, is standing by his plan, which would have meant \$2.7 billion, he is standing by his plan to give money to banks, institutions, in interest charges. That's where that would have led.

Mr. Speaker, we made some responsible choices last year to increase revenue in our province. There was virtually no choice to secure the financial foundation. But this province today is much better shape; Nalcor is in much better shape – no thanks to them, but thanks to the people on this side of the House.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador is very fortunate to have two professional and very capable police services servicing the people of our province. Since last year's budget, there have been cuts to policing resources.

I ask the government today: Will policing resources remain intact this year and for the long term, ensuring the safety and security of the people of the province?

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

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

I'm certainly happy to speak to both of our police forces who we're very lucky to have, and certainly I've done my best to support them in my tenure here. Again, as it relates to budgetary decisions, the Members on the other side know that the budget will be delivered here in the House tomorrow.

What I can see is that last year there were certainly no touches to officers on the ground. I've worked with them; I'll continue to work with them and to provide them the support that they need to provide safety to the men and women of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I ask the minister: Will the existing gas tax be converted to a carbon tax?

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

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

As we've said in the past, the temporary gas tax which was put in, in budget 2016-2017 – at that point, it really had nothing to do with the carbon tax. We, through the minister and through the work that we've done at the Council of the Federation, have been able to put in some climate change processes for the future of Canada and for all jurisdictions.

The neat thing about the carbon tax is that, based on the discussions and negotiations that we were able to finalize, that we can use that tax when it is implemented by the federal government. We can use that at the discretion of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The discretion for that tax remains here, and we will not be, as I said so many times now, putting a carbon tax on top of any temporary gas tax.

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

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

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

I want to point out – he says not putting a carbon tax on top of the gas tax; that was not my question. I said replacing the gas tax.

Under this government, taxes are up, prices are up, unemployment is up and people are fed up. Does the minister or the Premier understand that now is not the time to introduce a carbon tax?

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

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

Well, as has been said by the federal government on many occasions now, the carbon tax is something that will be directed from the federal government. We can use it as a discretion right here. It becomes revenue to the provincial Treasury. It can be used to support Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, at the sole discretion of government of the day.

Right now, that was keenly very important for us to be able to work with our industries, to be able to work with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, to maintain competitive. But this tax, the carbon tax, we will be able to use for programs within Newfoundland and Labrador at the sole discretion of the government of the day.

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

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

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

I guess we have a new tax coming.

The Liberals promised to bring in \$50 million this past year by selling government assets. Based on your current rate of return, you will meet your target in 2066. Considering you have reached the 2.6 of your goal, are you embarrassed to release your real estate report?

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

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

I'm not embarrassed at all. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we are working through looking at efficiencies within our government and I think I was – yesterday, I made reference to the fact that we have disposed of a couple of our assets that we had, fairly significant ones.

Not only are we disposing of the assets, when we look at that and we have a return on that, there are also efficiencies and savings within that as well, Mr. Speaker, because if you look at some of the – and I'll just use the example, the *Sir Robert Bond* that was lying in Lewisporte for a considerable – since 2014, and roughly about \$1,500 to \$1,600 a day from the previous administration. These are areas that we have really targeted. We're looking at efficiencies and we're certainly working towards that, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to do that because we are fiscally responsible in what we're doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, Quebec is getting approximately \$11 billion this year in equalization –

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

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That's not laughable.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** No, it's not very funny at all, actually, Mr. Speaker.

– and delivered a third budget surplus this year. They can provide reasonable services at reasonable taxation levels.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Will *Budget 2017* again tax and fee Newfoundland and Labrador residents beyond what is needed under the Constitution of Canada?

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

Before I recognize the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, I'm absolutely delighted to recognize anybody to speak if you stand to be recognized. If you don't stand to be recognized to speak, I ask that you respect the individual that is.

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

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

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to stand in this House today. I would like to, in answering the Member opposite's question, correct the Member for Conception Bay South. We have said repeatedly, since November, that there would be no new taxes and no new fees in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

The Members opposite, I guess, are continuing to propagate the myths that they like to share with the people of the province. Quite frankly, we're going to be very honest and tell people of the province exactly what we're doing.

If the Members opposite had shown up at discussions around equalization, maybe we'd be in a different space today, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, this administration did show up but it resulted in a \$2 billion payment in 2005 and offset payments to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, *Budget 2016* –

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

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

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** *Budget 2016* identified \$300 million more in program services and overall net expenditures increased by \$800 million than the previous year.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Will this budget see additional growth again this year?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the Member opposite for the opportunity to stand up and speak today. I would suggest, though, that accepting a lump sum payment when you don't understand the view to the future and the risks associated with that, it's not really a win.

Secondly, with regard to his question about spending in the budget tomorrow, I'll be pleased to provide the Members of this House transparency into that when I stand up tomorrow.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I advise the minister as well, in 2012 there was a Finance Ministers' meeting across Canada where input was given to equalization. In 2014, then the late Minister Flaherty didn't introduce changes to the equalization formula. So she needs to get some more research done. She knows exactly what's going on in regard to financing in the country, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the Finance Minister admitted that oil revenues have increased due to production being four times higher than 2015.

I ask the minister: Will you acknowledge the impact of the improved oil revenues in tomorrow's budget or will you view it as being addicted to oil?

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

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite in his preamble referred again to the discussions around equalization in prior years and somehow takes credit for conversations that actually didn't yield anything.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Members opposite, when they were in government, did not understand the risks to our province when it came to oil prices. What I can tell the Member opposite is I'm going to be, we will be, as transparent in this House in our budget around oil prices and the facts about oil prices as we have been all year long on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Finance webpage, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Will the Minister of Finance commit today to easing the burden placed on people by last year's budget and commit to cancel the lazy Liberal tax grabs that impact people and business so negatively in our Province?

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

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Member opposite that lazy is a word that I intend to eradicate from their language when they talk about the work of this government.

Mr. Speaker, the Members on this side have been working extremely hard to fix the laziness of the other administration who didn't plan for where we were going to be with oil prices, who didn't plan for where we were going to be with production and who also didn't understand that when you have an economy built on a boom and bust mentality, that that does not inspire a diversified economy. It's what this side of the House is working on. We will fix their laziness, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** That wasn't very nice, Mr. Speaker.

People on the Burin Peninsula are hearing that as part of the identified health care savings in this year's budget, there will be significant changes to the operations at the health care centres in Grand Bank and St. Lawrence.

Will the Burin Peninsula see a reduction in health care services as a result of *Budget 2017*?

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

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

I'm really pleased to be able to stand in the House. It's been a while since I had a question from the Opposition Health critic. I've done my

best over my short tenure here to try and answer those questions accurately and truthfully, and also to provide information to the House on those occasions when I haven't had the facts immediately to hand.

It's with some ambivalence I stand here today knowing that after my last exchange with the Member opposite he went immediately to page on social media to accuse me of lying in the House, to this House, manipulating the words and playing with words. So on this occasion, maybe he could stay off his machine long enough for me to answer the question.

Consultations between the population who live on the Burin Peninsula and Eastern Health will continue as to how best to provide primary care.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** When he doesn't want to tell the truth, Mr. Speaker, he gets personal, and they certainly don't like what I'm reporting –

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

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

I ask the Member to retract the statement he just made.

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

I retract the statement.

Last year we saw cuts to X-ray services, and now, even in light of the minister's comments, people on the Burin Peninsula should be even more concerned about losing lab services and have clinic hours reduced.

Can the minister confirm that there will be changes in 2017? He's confirmed that there are discussions ongoing. Will he confirm that there will in fact be impact on health services on the Burin Peninsula in 2017?

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

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

The thrust of this department, as with the government on this side of the House, is to transform the way health care in this province is delivered.

I would remind the Member opposite, for the last year for which we have figures, that under their watch we spent in this province \$7,130 per person on health care. The comparator at that time was \$5,998 per capita for the Canadian average. For that difference of just shy of \$1,200, we have not seen and continue as yet not to see any benefit to the health and the care of the people in this province. We cannot continue to spend money the way we have. We need to do things differently, and we can do.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** So doing things differently will result in less services available to the people of the Burin Peninsula at some point this year.

Last year's budget slashed over \$9 million from the province's Home Support Program. This devastating cut had a tremendously negative outcome for so many individuals and families who relied on that essential care.

Can families expect further cuts to home care in 2017?

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

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

To follow on from a question from the Third Party yesterday, in late fall we received a report from Deloitte Consulting. In there, there is a 24 or maybe 25-point implementation plan for home care and revamping the value of the home care dollars.

We have begun to implement that and we are continuing to roll that out to ensure we get the



best value for home support dollars in this province.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** So it sounds like there are more cuts coming to home care as well.

Last year's budget almost completely eliminated the Adult Dental Program. Recognizing the importance of oral health on a person's overall health and well-being, will the Liberal government reverse this damaging decision?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite for the last number of weeks has been throwing out numbers as if he has information that I don't understand he would have. He's been in the public saying that members in the Department of Finance, officials in the Department of Finance have been giving him information. He has gone out in public and said there are going to be hundreds of millions of dollars cut from health care.

Mr. Speaker, if that Member opposite has access to information in the Department of Finance and senior officials he's accusing of breaking their oath of public office, I would ask him to provide me that information, or the other alternative is that the Member opposite enjoys bluffing this House.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** They don't like the questions, Mr. Speaker, and, frankly we, don't like the answers. Very few are forthcoming today, and this is only causing people to be more concerned about what's coming tomorrow.

*Budget 2016* cut funding to over-the-counter medication for seniors and slashed funding for

diabetic supplies. Following major cuts last year, will tomorrow's budget once again target the province's Prescription Drug Program?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question I actually gave yesterday. We have 130,000 people registered for the NLPDP, of whom 103,000 are active users of the program. For over-the-counter drug supplies the last figures I had – those are actually available, on special authorization, if a prescriber feels they are of clinical need to the patient and benefit. We have had 410 out of 103,000 applications and they have been granted. By my calculation, that's 0.019 per cent.

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

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

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

Will Budget 2017 put to rest the fears your government has created with the number of public sector layoffs yet to come? Will you lay out the details of your public sector job reduction plan tomorrow?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, the budget is going to be delivered tomorrow. I hope in the budget debate that ensues, the Member who just spoke, does not continue to display a complete ignorance of the kindergarten to grade 12 system in this province.

Last year after the budget, he stood over there and demanded that we eliminate multi-grading in this province, which has existed for decades and decades, which would require the hiring of 500 new teachers, 500 new classrooms and the dollar value on the teachers alone is about \$46 million. So I hope at least we can have an informed discussion about the budget this year, unlike the foolishness that the Member has been getting on with since the budget was delivered last year.

Thank you.

**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 ask the minister: Have you budgeted funding to support the \$100 million fisheries fund?

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

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

We'll be happy to actually budget government money to support the Atlantic Fisheries Fund. We've always said that we will be there willing to invest in the fishing industry in our province, Mr. Speaker. I think now is more of a critical time than ever.

I just want to go back to a question that came up earlier in Question Period when it was so important they make the fishery – they pretend that the fishery is so important to them. What they did just a few Question Periods ago, Mr. Speaker, is that the former premier actually put the fixed link, last year's budget, ahead of the fisheries crisis that currently the province is facing.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're going to work with the fishing industry. We'll be working with harvesters, plant workers and processors. We will be there as a government to support that industry.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the Premier that it was two days after the cuts came down in the shrimp fishery that you decided to call the Minister of Fisheries.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** And that's so important.

After the dust settles from this week's budget in Newfoundland and Labrador, we will continue to hold the title as the only province in entire country to have a book tax?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the question. As we described in last year's budget, we will be undertaking a tax review. That tax review is designed to ensure that the competitiveness of both our personal income tax, corporate income tax is intact and any discussions or decisions around tax changes, which there will be none in the budget tomorrow – tax increases I should say, will be made as part of that review.

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

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

**MS. PERRY:** Government's job is to create and support the economic climate to encourage new business and economic opportunities.

What actions will you take in Budget 2017 to establish tax incentives for small business growth?

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, we have a very progressive small business tax. We have it at 3 per cent. It's the third lowest in the country, which is very good at being able to support small business in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I visited a small business yesterday that is hiring new workers, that's growing. There are a variety of programs that my department has to help with competitiveness, technology, productivity. As well as when we look at the labour component, the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour has various supports that we do to remain competitive, to advance key sectors. *The Way Forward* highlighted a significant amount of initiatives as to how we're going to grow the economy, whether it be in traditional industries or whether it be in the technology sector.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, we confirmed this morning that several members of the board of directors of Marble Mountain were terminated by the Liberal government this morning.

Can the minister confirm that that's in fact the case and please explain to this hon. House why those actions have happened?

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

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

As minister responsible for the Marble Mountain Development Corporation, I can confirm that all expired members for the Marble Mountain Development Corporation were terminated. Any member that was not expired has continued in their position.

The Marble Mountain Development Corporation and Marble Mountain is a key infrastructure asset to the West Coast of the province and we will continue to operate and grow Marble Mountain and the West Coast to its full potential, and we want to certainly have the goal of ensuring that it is sustainable.

Thank you.

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

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

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

During the 2015 election, the current government committed to do a comprehensive review of government's real estate portfolio and determine how best to enhance its public value.

I ask the Premier: Has he kept his promise of a compressive review?

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

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

Well, as part of *The Way Forward* for Newfoundland and Labrador for growth and sustainability in our province, one of the things we want to take a real in-depth look at was how we use government buildings, government assets, Mr. Speaker, and all of this in light of reducing the government footprint.

Mr. Speaker, we've exceeded expectations so far and making sure that we use government buildings appropriately wherever possible. All of this in mind to make sure we cut the waste out of government, we use government buildings efficiently, Mr. Speaker. We will take every single opportunity where there's a way to save money for taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador to appropriately use the assets that we have available to us that is government owned, Mr. Speaker. We're doing that, we're exceeding expectations, and that plan will continue.

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

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

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

Exceeding expectations? During the 2015 campaign, the Liberals stated that their plan for selling government real estate would provide \$50 million a year in revenue but this week Hoyles-Escasoni was sold for a mere \$650,000.

I ask the Premier: Does government's plan consist of selling off public assets at fire sale prices instead of waiting until markets pick up again?

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

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

Well, there's one thing about selling a building, there's another thing about looking at the cost of keeping that asset that was no longer being used by government to actually financing that. In this particular case, the asset that the Member is asking about was costing government \$100,000 a year to keep in place, Mr. Speaker. So it

wasn't only about the revenue that would have been generated from that asset, it was about the cost to government to actually supporting that asset in the current situation.

Added to that, Mr. Speaker, there were significant environmental liabilities to the tune of some \$4 million. So when you package that all together, there is a significant savings for this province, Mr. Speaker. Number one, to get rid of the environmental liability – number one, there was revenue generated; and, number two, to reduce the cost of requirement on that particular asset.

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

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

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

To continue the discussion on the assets, the federal government has renewed its surplus properties program that provides government properties across the country for affordable housing and shelter projects. The province also has valuable assets that can be used for such projects.

I ask the Premier: Why has he not stopped the sale of all provincial assets until government has fully consulted with community organizations and municipalities about the potential use of government property for affordable housing and shelter projects?

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

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

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

As the Premier has already said, we are certainly looking at all the assets we have. We have to realize that some of the assets we have taken from the previous administration are assets that have been lying dormant for quite some time.

One of the first things I did when I became minister is look at some of the assets and look at some of the problems we were facing. I engaged some discussions with some private companies

and talking about that, and one of the things that was very clear to me is that as we continue to let these building dilapidate, it gets to a point there is not much option for us other than to dispose of it. Really, the use of it and looking at the environmental problems that are there, continue to be a challenge. As we go forward, all assets that we have, we will look at it as an opportunity to either dispose of or to reuse.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I am asking the minister, could he, please, table any analysis that he has done. Has he consulted with community groups, municipalities, housing advocates who are clearly saying they need these types of properties? They can be used for the provincial, federal and municipal housing plans.

Have they done that work? And, if so, let's see the analysis.

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

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

It all sounds great, Mr. Speaker. When you look at any redevelopment of, no matter what, if it's housing or older buildings, there is always a cost factor that is involved in that.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at whether we are going to dispose of an asset that we have, certainly we look at it and we have that discussion. We determine the best option for that. One of the things and challenges we are faced with, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we have to deal with some very, very difficult decisions with regard to assets or properties that we had.

We continue to work through that, Mr. Speaker, and we determine whether it makes sense for us to dispose of that property, or if, in fact, there are other opportunities. Especially when there are environmental issues and problems and it's easy for the Members to talk about.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** 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 Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Excuse me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling one Order in Council relating to a funding pre-commitment for the 2018-2019, and the 2019-2020 fiscal years, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** In accordance with section 19(5)(a) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I hereby table the minutes of the House of Assembly Management Commission meeting held on February 27, 2017.

Further tabling of documents.

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Public Service Pensions Act, 1991. (Bill 7)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 8)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

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

WHEREAS *Budget 2016* implemented a regressive tax on books in this province; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province in the country to have such tax; and

WHEREAS the tax will undoubtedly affect literacy rates in this province, as well as negatively impact local authors and publishers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to cancel this ill-conceived book tax immediately.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is the last opportunity we have before Budget 2017 is brought down to implore upon our colleagues opposite to eliminate this regressive tax in tomorrow's budget. As well as many of the other regressive taxes that have resulted in the worst economy we've seen in this province in decades.

This book tax in particular is harming our young people, it's harming our seniors, it's harming our entrepreneurs. We cannot afford to withstand much more of this type of regressive policies and continue to have hope for this province, because education is the very foundation, as we hear so many people get up and speak about in this House, the very foundation of economic growth, economic stability. We are calling upon this government to eliminate this tax in tomorrow's budget.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Orders of the Day**

**Private Members' Day**

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

It being Private Members' Day, I call on the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port to present his private Member's resolution.

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

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

WHEREAS most gas stations and fast-food restaurants/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 restaurants/drive-throughs and gas stations.

Mr. Speaker, that is the private Member's resolution as it stands that I introduced this past Monday, and was seconded by the Member for Lab West. I just want to take a moment for those who might be listening to put some, I guess, information behind what a private Member's resolution is. A private Member's resolution is referring to a private Member; a private Member in this House of Assembly would be anyone

who is not a minister. So a private Member would be anyone who is not a minister of the Cabinet. It would also include Members of the Opposition, the Third Party, as well as any Independent Member.

Mr. Speaker, I say that just to kind of clarify because as a private Member in this caucus, we would discuss ideas from time to time. The idea which I'm looking to talk about today is something that was specifically brought up to me in my district. It's also something that I felt quite strongly about.

Recycling, waste management, littering and seeing how we can reduce our footprint in general is something that I've really taken great notice to, particularly over these last 15 months. That's because the district which I'm so fortunate to represent is some-775 kilometres from the City of St. John's. So oftentimes, while I certainly do travel via Stephenville Airport to St. John's, via Deer Lake Airport and so on, there are times in which I drive across this province. The drive from Stephenville to St. John's can run you anywhere from 7½ to 8½ hours, and depending on weather it could run you longer.

One thing I've really noticed as I embark on this drive – and I happened to do the drive at least four times since the beginning of January of this year. One thing I do notice is that during this duration, you would have to stop several times to fill up gas. Each time that I would do so, be it in Deer Lake or Bishop's Falls, or Clarendville or anywhere along the way for that matter, I would stop at gas stations and then I would often find myself running to a different fast-food establishment for a coffee or a snack, if you will, and each time it just struck me that there was no symbolism of what we commonly see around various establishments and buildings, these blue boxes and the symbolism that the blue box carries with respect to encouraging recycling.

So that kind of dawned on me, it had me having a conversation with individuals in the district. I actually also specifically spoke to environmental health officers who work with Service NL. I have friends of mine and individuals in the district who work in these positions and they informed me that they visit these establishments annually and sometimes, more frequently, to do a variety of protocols and checks around the

waste management protocol, around food inspection and what have you. It kind of got me thinking that we already have individuals in this province, in this government, under the Department of Service NL that visits these various establishments to look at their rationales, their protocols and procedures and it kind of got me thinking how is that we can't think about another way where we can just incorporate another aspect.

I guess in the spirit of the motion what I want to make clear to the Members opposite – I'll certainly look forward to their support today and am really interested in hearing what they would have to share. The spirit of the motion is to start a conversation and it's to start a conversation about recycling and how we can do better.

When we begin looking at some of the research, to understand that Newfoundland and Labrador has the lowest recycling rate in the country, yet we have the second lowest population, it's quite astonishing. Prince Edward Island has the highest rate of recycling in the country. Obviously, they have a smaller population than Newfoundland and Labrador but with us having the second lowest population, you'd like to think we would be somewhere up there in the higher ranks. You'd like to think that we could do something a bit better.

The ads that we often hear and it will stick with me, ever since my childhood. "Newfoundland and Labrador: It's Yours Keep It Clean." I don't think there's a Member in this House or many that are maybe listening at home or elsewhere that would not have heard these ads: "Newfoundland and Labrador: It's Yours Keep It Clean."

In fact, the billboards with that ad are plastered all across this great province. They plastered all across this great province, so I'm just thinking this particular time of year we're going to see some of the snow melt, hopefully. I'm sure it will melt in the metro region here and on the Avalon a lot sooner than Central and perhaps in West and in Labrador as well. But it's the time of year, Mr. Speaker, where you actually start to see the litter rearing its ugly face and you start to see when that snow melts, there are wrappers, cans and coffee cups, a variety of litter and garbage.

We promote ourselves as a top tourist destination. We certainly do, and there's so much to do. We do a wonderful job of keeping some of our parks clean and some of our national parks clean. There are municipalities in this province that do a fantastic job when it comes to recycling and waste management.

I understand there is a varying degree of governance structure involved when we talk about waste management and recycling. A lot of this falls right now with municipalities. But I believe that there is a role for government to play. Again, the motion states that I would like us to consider legislation. I would wish to be on the record to say that any time we could consider legislation – because this is not a legislative motion here today; this is a resolution. Any time we would consider legislation, we would have to consult with stakeholders in the industry.

In fact, we would love to consult with the stakeholders in the industry. By no means possible does my motion intend to arbitrarily bind any individual business owner of a gas station or fast-food establishment, no intention to bind them to partaking in this.

There are a number of significant challenges, Mr. Speaker, when we look at recycling. You can picture yourself going through a drive-through and you place your order and there happens to be a bin there, now most motorists – and you'll see them. You'll see them as you go through these places. They will start emptying out everything that they have in their car and piling things out.

Some of the problem lies in the weeds of that. I'm not going belabour that too much now because while it is a challenge – for example, if there was an aluminum tin recycling bin there and I decided to throw in left-over food, it may contaminate the product and, therefore, the product may not ever end up being recycled. So there are a number of challenges there, but I'm raising the issue and I want to be on the record for raising the issue, and encourage a discussion around this so we can come up with creative solutions, so we can look at ways how we can do things better, being the lowest recycling rate in the country.

Now, I referenced the fact just a few moments ago that there are a couple of different levels of governance structure here. We obviously have the Provincial Waste Management Strategy. We have our fine folks at the MMSB, the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board, and there are different varying degrees of roles in governance. While municipalities drive a lot of the efforts behind recycling, some of them do so quite well, and some of them more so than others.

I want to bring up for a moment the Town of Cape St. George, which is located on the Port au Port Peninsula. The Town of Cape St. George was awarded in 2015 by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities a waste reduction award. What Mayor Peter Fenwick and his council set to achieve was to figure out how they could reduce what is going into the landfill. They identified that while we have a provincial waste management strategy, and we have transfer stations, and we'll have various landfills, they said we're the farthest you could be geographically from this landfill. So they said, how can we reduce out tonnage of what we put into the landfill?

So they took an approach whereby they started a curbside recycling program. They used funds from their federal gas tax, they went and purchased their own recycling truck and then they partnered with all their local schools to encourage recycling. Not only did they get into the recycling, Mr. Speaker, they took it a step further. They actually recycle Styrofoam. They'll take all the Styrofoam they receive, they'll put it in a wood chipper, they'll take the final product of that and then they'll use it to insulate waterlines when a new home is built. So they're recycling Styrofoam in that fashion.

They embarked on composting material. They even took it one step further; one thing we don't recycle in this province is tin cans. So they embarked on a process where they would recycle tin cans. Any food matter that would have been in a tin can, they would have them cleaned and what have you. They would bring them to the local scrapyards where the cars would be ready to be demolished, they would fill up the cars, then when the car got compacted all of their tin can material got recycled in that as well.

There are a couple of things they realized as a result of this exercise, and rightfully so. They were awarded by the way, as I said, by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Some of the results; a 25 per cent reduction in waste brought to the transfer station in their first year – 25 per cent reduction. This is from a town that has a population of 948 citizens. This is what they embarked on.

All beverage containers in the community are recycled; kitchen waste is diverted from the landfill for composting. There are fewer greenhouse gas emissions linked to transporting waste; there's up to a 50 per cent reduction in waste transfer costs. The school breakfast program is funded entirely through recycling. The community pride and the town's leadership, the student involvement in raising awareness, and the less littering and dumping in natural areas, that's one municipality in this province and the efforts they embarked on to look at how can they reduce things going to the landfill and how could they achieve better ways to recycle.

Again, the spirit of the motion today, I didn't directly pick on fast-food restaurants and gas stations. I've noted them specifically for travelling motorists.

In the Town of Cape St. George, residents in their homes have the ability to recycle. They have the option. The service is there being provided by the municipality. There are some municipalities where this service is not provided. There are local service districts that may not be able to provide this type of service, but the reality is if the service is available to folks at home, they're more than likely to use it.

When we talk about travelling motorists, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, how I often travel some 700-plus kilometres from the West Coast to the East Coast. Travelling motorists do not have the opportunity to do this. So what we see happening is we see a lot of material that could be recycled being put directly into our normal waste, therefore taking up our landfills.

Again, this being suggested as an area where could look at considering some legislation simply so that travelling motorists and the public, particularly tourists and residents who move about the province, would have an



opportunity. The symbolism I believe that this would create, it speaks volumes.

People are less inclined, and studies have shown this – people are less inclined to litter when they see a clean and pristine area. There are often times and challenges associated with garbage bins. When someone sees a garbage bin overflowing they may be inclined to just place trash near or around the area, or if they took recycling and they didn't know, or they put it in the wrong box and some of these things, but the reality is the conversation needs to begin.

I think we're doing some great things with the MMSB, and I think there are a lot of things we can improve on. I'm going to point to that before I conclude with my final moment-and-a-half here remarks and we turn it over to the Opposition. I have a couple of my colleagues who will speak and add their voice to this today, but this struck me because I brought up the idea again.

As I've travelled the province it strikes me. It's that time of year now; spring will show some of the waste and refuge. As well, it's brought up to me by individuals in the district and individuals who work in departments that service this industry. When we looked at researching this just early last week, it turns out that the MMSB actually did do a recent audit and study. They went around and did an audit of a number of areas across Newfoundland and Labrador. Some 235 audits determined, and select audits as well, 17 gas stations were audited in this province and only one of the 17 had ability for a recycling receptacle to be there.

I'm not suggesting there are folks that aren't willing to participate, or maybe they don't have great intentions or want to participate. There would certainly be infrastructure needs required and training, but the reality is in the research we've even seen from our own Multi-Materials Stewardship Board, we're actually being shown the evidence of which I'm suggesting from this motion today.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from the Members opposite. It would be very interesting to see what they have to add. Of course, the Members of the PC Party had a number of initiatives introduced in waste

management. This is just one aspect that I'm looking to speak about today, but I really hope it sparks the conversation that everyone can be involved in and something that we can all strive to have a clean and greener environment here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm glad to rise in this House always but surprised to be rising to speak to this resolution on the eve of another Liberal budget.

Let me start by saying I support recycling. My kids would be very happy to know that I'm talking about recycling at any point in time. They are recycling evangelists. They actually do periodic audits of the buckets in our kitchen to make sure people are fully complying with getting everything in the right place. I think that speaks to the level of awareness that the next generation has about the importance of good environmental citizenship including good recycling practices, which I've long been a champion of.

Let's re-read the actual resolution that we're debating today, just so we keep in mind what we're actually talking about here today.

“WHEREAS most gas stations and fast-food restaurants/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 Honourable House recognizes the importance of increasing recycling in the Province, and urges the Government to consider legislation requiring recycling containers be present at fast food-restaurants/drive-throughs and gas stations.”

Yet, the Member opposite suggests that he's not targeting fast-food restaurants, drive-throughs

and gas stations. When I saw this resolution – as surprised as I was to see it on the eve of budget – I decided to reach out to a few businesses in my district. I contacted a number of fast-food outlets and gas stations, and all of them said the same thing. They said we support recycling. We're doing lots of things within our individual businesses to encourage recycling. We have bins inside our facilities and we do recycle. We're required by law to recycle to some degree, but they said the concept of putting bins outside is actually ridiculous and won't solve the problem.

What's actually called for in this resolution is not supported by players in the industry that I've consulted with over the last 24 hours. Of all the issues of concern to people in Newfoundland and Labrador right now, on the eve of another Liberal budget, is this really the highest priority the governing Liberals can come up with for one of their three or four private Member's motions this sitting –

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

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

**MR. KENT:** – the lack of recycling bins at places like McDonald's and the need for legislation to change that.

What about Ottawa renegeing on a fisheries fund agreement worth hundreds of millions of dollars? Is that less important than the lack of recycling bins at Burger King?

What about Ottawa ignoring –

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

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

**MR. KENT:** – fairness on equalization?

**MR. SPEAKER:** I ask all hon. Members to respect the hon. Member who has the floor.

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

So what about Ottawa ignoring fairness on equalization, when Quebec is getting \$11 billion this year with another balanced budget, and we are seeing tax cuts in Quebec and spending hikes in health and education, while we get nothing –

is that less important than the lack of recycling bins at McDonald's?

What about the government talking about making further cuts to health care, as we heard in Question Period today?

**MR. A. PARSONS:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are speaking to a private Member's resolution –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What Standing Order?

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Forty-eight, thank you. Maybe the PC leader can stand up after my point of order – again, he wouldn't know what section it was.

Mr. Speaker, we are speaking to a private Member's resolution that is clearly defined and on the Order Paper, yet the Member is talking about something that's completely opposite and is not relevant to the private Member's resolution that's been made.

I think that we need to follow the private Member's resolution and keep it relevant to that, and I would suggest that he speak to the resolution. If he does not want to support it, he can vote against it. But for him to talk about the things that he does not want to speak about is completely irrelevant.

Thank you.

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

I will take the point of order under advisement and report back to the House.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

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

It seems that whenever I rise in the House today, the Members opposite don't like what I have to say. They don't want to hear it. They just don't want to hear the truth. But this issue that's being

raised today is trivial in comparison to issues like people's taxes going through the roof. What about government's projections of 30,000 job losses in the next five years? What about ours being the only economy in the country facing decline? What about deep cuts in shrimp stocks affecting thousands of families, businesses closing up shop, uncertainty gripping the province in the absence of an economic plan, shortfalls in seniors' care and long-term care, shortfalls in mental health care, shortfalls in violence prevention –

**MR. KING:** Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

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

**MR. KING:** Section 48, again: relevance, Mr. Speaker.

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

I'd asked the hon. Member to stay relevant to the private Member's resolution as directed by the Chair.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

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

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

Is the lack of recycling bins at McDonald's really the biggest priority the Liberals could identify for their very first private Member's motion of the year?

Even if you take the lack recycling bins at fast-food outlets to be a worthy issue, deserving of number one priority status for the Liberal caucus for their legislative sitting, is this the proper approach needed to driving recycling and pollution prevention, or is it way off the mark? And I would argue, Mr. Speaker, in the time that hasn't been stolen from me this afternoon, that it is way off the mark.

What this resolution is saying is that the province is not recycling enough. The blame lies at the feet of gas stations, fast-food restaurants and drive-throughs. Therefore, let's use the heavy hand of legislation to force them to buy recycling bins and bear the burden of driving

recycling or else punish them with fines or worse.

So the Liberal solution is let's create new laws, new regulations, new red tape for employers in the province, the same employers that the Liberals have pummelled with exorbitant increases in taxes since coming to office. So let's jeopardize the bottom lines of these employers, jeopardize the profits of these mom-and-pop enterprises, jeopardize the jobs of minimum wage employees that so many of them sustain, and drive up the cost to consumers who patronize their businesses.

Was there any consultation with businesses before coming up with this new policy, other than the consultation that I did in my own district? It sure doesn't look like it. When you look at correspondence that everybody in this House received on April 4 from the director of Provincial Affairs with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business in the province, it's clear that lots of people weren't consulted.

Mr. Vaughn Hammond wrote: On April 5, you will debate a private Member's motion urging the government to consider legislation requiring recycling containers to be present at fast-food restaurants, drive-throughs and gas stations. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business strongly recommends Members of the House of Assembly unanimously reject this motion.

The motion seeks to legislate individual behaviour, over which business owners have very little control. It's an unnecessary burden on fast-food restaurants, drive-throughs and gas stations, with no guarantee the legislation will be effective in increasing recycling rates in the province.

The motion unfairly targets a segment of the business community, thereby implying the low recycling rates in the province are caused by fast-food restaurants, drive-throughs and gas stations. It would place a greater cost on those businesses at a time when they are feeling the pressure of higher taxes and fees.

In addition, convenience store and gas station owners have to deal with the effects of the increase in minimum wage on April 1 and the future increase on October 1. Many business

owners will question why they have to incur the costs of recycling in the province, as suggested in a CFIB report shared with you in March of 2017.

So the letter goes on to raise concerns about precedent and encroaching on municipalities' jurisdiction in the province. But it's clear that the business community also has lots of concerns with this approach.

Those statements by the CFIB don't sound like a ringing endorsement of the recycling policy that we're hearing advanced today. It sounds more like a condemnation. It sounds like proof of the fact that this idea was poorly conceived, perhaps scribbled on the back of a napkin at MacDonald's – who knows?

If the government truly wants to increase recycling in the province, it should look at what the government can do, instead of seeking ways to punish employers and others for not doing the government's job.

Is government doing enough at promoting recycling at all of its offices, boards, agencies and commissions? Because if not, maybe it should get its own house in order before faulting others. If recycling is not happening, is it because of a lack of recycling bins or is it a different problem? Perhaps the lack of infrastructure and services to make recycling feasible. If there are downstream issues, then a penalty imposed on these businesses won't solve them. It will simply hurt the enterprises, hurt small businesses in virtually every community in Newfoundland and Labrador without driving recycling.

So how is a solution to a pollution problem? The government has the Multi-Material Stewardship Board at its disposal. What I heard from business owners is that there can be improvements made to how the whole process works for MMSB as it involves businesses. So that's where our focus should be. MMSB is well financed. There is much they do and can do to promote and facilitate recycling, reuse and reduction of waste.

In fact, they're been doing really good work, but there are challenges as have been pointed out to me by business owners in my district. The

government ought to identify the challenges and find effective ways to address them before bringing out the big stick to clobber small business owners as if they are the source of the government's woes. This is typical Liberal policy, Mr. Speaker, trying to find someone else to blame for their own failings.

So the right approach to this challenge, as with all the others, is to bring people around the table to discuss it, identify the challenges, dig down into the complexities to get at the root causes and then try approaches that will actually make a difference. The carrot usually works better than the stick. Pollution control works best if it is incentivized, not through punishment, but through reward, motivation and inspiration.

The last thing our economy needs is a government smashing battered employers over the head and jeopardizing more jobs through more red tape and higher levels of taxation than they already endure.

So how did such a motion ever pass the smell test to begin with? I know that the Member opposite and the Premier who defended him in Question Period said well, private Members can bring forward whatever they want. Who ever said oh yeah, there's the big challenge our province is facing today and that's what we should use Private Members' Day in this House to debate?

Fortunately, for businesses in this province, motions like this are non-binding. So I suppose you could just pass it and then ignore it; hoping everyone will forget about it and you can slink away to lick your wounds and try better next time. The truly responsible course of action today would be for all of you to recognize that this resolution, in its current form, what's specifically stated in this motion, is just a bad idea. It's poorly thought out, it's poorly written and it should be voted down.

Just admit that it was poorly conceived, or perhaps bring in an amendment – there is a process this afternoon that allows for that – and take out the offensive parts. Not much will remain, mind you, but at least you may retain some measure of dignity for not doing the wrong thing. Next time, I would urge Members on the

government side to spend more time conceiving of the challenges and the ways to solve them.

There are plenty of issues that matter to people in Newfoundland and Labrador, plenty of issues that need to be resolved and plenty of ways to resolve them. So bring forward some ideas that reflect what people are calling for; things that would actually work. Back away from the notions of blaming others and of using the heavy hand of legislation and regulatory penalties to achieve things that good governance might actually be able to solve.

We all want to reduce waste, we all promote recycling and we want to keep our province as pristine as possible, and there's more work to do. There are ways to achieve that and this is not the way. So start actually listening to employers in the province, not just on recycling, Mr. Speaker, but on a whole host of issues. They'll tell you about more than just recycling. They'll tell you about the need for corporate tax relief, gas tax relief, insurance tax relief and economic planning that includes creating the conditions for growth.

Businesses are not the enemy. They are the drivers of employment growth. These firms are the canary in the coal mine that will show you something is fundamentally wrong when they start to fail. This government has shown a dismal lack of understanding of the fundamentals of driving economic growth, and that's why our province is facing economic decline while all other provinces are turning the corner.

Folks opposite will say that's political talk. Well, it happens to be the truth, and it's time for Liberals to go back to school and learn the fundamentals of driving growth. This motion's approach is a symptom of the wrong-headed approach that is jeopardizing all the gains that have been made in this province over the last 11 or 12 years, all the growth and all the job creation, which no one can deny.

So we've got to get back to fundamentals that work. Leave the harebrained ideas where they belong, in the recycling bins of their own offices, perhaps. Listen to what business owners are actually saying. I talked to gas station owners and operators. I talked to operators of

fast-food outlets who have had recycling bins in place outdoors. It has created more of a mess; it's created more of a hazard. People have not put recycling in the right compartments. The bins have ended up full of garbage. The solution that's being purposed here today hasn't worked, and there is a better way.

This is poorly thought out. There are far more important issues that we need to be talking about on the eve of another devastating Liberal budget, which we will face tomorrow in the province, Mr. Speaker. We deserve better in this Legislature, and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve better as well.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

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

It's a pleasure for me to rise today and to support my colleague for Stephenville – Port au Port in what we are trying to do here today. I can guarantee you – and I just listened to the Member from Mount Pearl North, and I'm astounded at some of the things that he is saying that is really disrespectful. It's disrespectful to us as Members of the House of Assembly, and it's disrespectful to the environment. Now we know where environment stands on their priority list. Mr. Speaker, I agree. We have some serious, serious issues facing this province, and we will address them tomorrow in the budget. Just wait for the budget and you will have a different story to tell, I might add.

What we are trying to do today is not heavy-hand businesses, small businesses, gas stations, drive-throughs, restaurants. We are doing what we are elected to do, and that's to start the conversation on improving what we have in place. Because what we have in place today is obviously not working.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Lowest rate in the country.

**MR. LETTO:** We have the lowest rate of recycling in the country. Now, I spent some time

on the MMSB, and I respect that organization. It's a great organization and it's done a lot of great work for this province. Especially around the Waste Management Strategy and the recycling that has taken place. There are a lot of good stories to be told about recycling in Newfoundland and Labrador.

One of the places that I always like to refer to for success stories are the schools. The schools have done enormous work and some great work on recycling, and they have used that recycling revenue to fund many, many important field trips, whether it is sports trips, whether it is activities within schools. Many schools use recycling as a means of fundraising for those very important events.

What the MMSB is also recognized for, Mr. Speaker, is that there is room for improvement, and we need to start that discussion. That is all my colleague is saying here today with this private Member's resolution. Yes, there are many important issues in this province on the eve of the budget, and there will be many important issues after the budget. But what we are doing here today is we are using the private Member's resolution process, which is what it is, a private Member's resolution, to start the conversation on improving the recycling in this province. One of the ways we need to do that is to look at what's not working today.

The MMSB through its audits, through its reports, have identified – and my colleague, the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port, referred to it in his comments. The audit that was done on gas stations, drive-throughs and convenience stores was really very, very poor. Because of that, the MMSB had identified these outlets as a possibility and an opportunity and a potential to improve recycling percentages.

Mr. Speaker, the MMSB set out, some time ago, a target for 70 per cent recycling in this province. We have not met that. In fact if we meet 65, it's a good year. So we have to improve. It's for the sake of our Waste Management Strategy. It's for the sake of the environment that we have to look at ways to improve, and the MMSB has identified that.

One of the things that they've identified when you talk about these outlets and when they get

the most business and the most traffic – because there are times of the year right now after a major snow storm, say, in Central, common sense would tell you that recycling bins may not be appropriate for days like today. One of the things that was recognized by the MMSB in their research is that the greatest consumption of products occurs from June to August.

Now, just think about it. June to August in this province, that's the peak of our tourism season, it's the peak of our stay-home travels, stay-home vacation people who like to take time off those months and travel around the province. So it's an opportunity and it's a time when these actions are at its largest.

They've identified this time period as the largest gap between sales and recovery, between June to August. That's the largest gap that we see in the recycling process in this province and it's an opportunity to bring that percentage up to 70 per cent or higher, for that matter. That's what we need to do.

They have also identified that MMSB, through their marketing process, have to be in the market during that time period, during this period. When you look at that, that's where our greatest opportunity lies. Mr. Speaker, one of the things that they also identified and it's really disappointing because they've also identified that when purchasing a product from a convenience store, gas station, it is more likely than not that the item will not end up in your recyclable bag destined for a green depot, and that's all we're saying.

We're not out there heavy handed on small business. It's an opportunity for small business because, I'll tell you why, statistics have shown that since 1997 more than 2.4 billion beverage containers, or 151,000 metric tons of material has been diverted from landfills and recycled into other products as a result of the beverage program. That's what we're targeting here, mostly the beverage program.

The beverage program directly supports approximately 125 full-time and 110 part-time positions throughout the province. Now that may not seem like big numbers, but it's employment, and it's an opportunity to improving the recycling process. There's an opportunity to

increase those numbers. Isn't that what we're all about? Isn't that what the Opposition keeps saying every day, that we're crushing jobs, we're getting rid of jobs and all this good stuff.

According to Statistics Canada, investing \$1 in waste management and remediation in Newfoundland and Labrador results in 77 cents worth of direct and indirect GDP. As such, over \$155 million in GDP growth has resulted in waste management investments made to the beverage program since the program began.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about destroying small business – not at all. It's all about the discussion, and starting a discussion around how we improve on recycling, how we improve the opportunities for small business, how we can improve the opportunities for employment, how we can improve the environment. Because, Mr. Speaker, if we don't do it, then when it comes time it may be too late for somebody else.

It's a responsibility we have to take upon ourselves, is to respect the environment. That's all my colleague is saying today, is starting the discussion. We're not going out tomorrow and implementing a law on small business.

As he stated in his remarks, if we were to consider legislation – if we were to move ahead with legislation, small businesses, the MMSB would be part of the discussion and would be part of the consultation. We're not going to do anything that impacts the sustainability or the profitability or the viability of a small business. We are here to help them, and that's what we will do.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you look at our legislation right now, we have legislation around littering, we have legislation around waste management, but we have no legislation really around recycling. We have to start somewhere. The recycling that's been promoted has been promoted through the MMSB, and they have done a real good job of it.

The province's *Environmental Protection Act*, for instance, does address recycling as part of a waste management system, but there is no obligation attached when it comes to businesses, either collecting waste or directing them and

how that should be collecting. That's what this is all about. It's to bring it into the 21st century.

Environment is so important today. We all hear about climate change and how we are not paying any respect for the environment. I go back to it again, as the Member from Mount Pearl North got up and said how trivial a matter this is. Mr. Speaker, this is not trivial. The environment is not trivial, not at all, because if we treat it as such, then our grandchildren and our great grandchildren won't have an environment to respect because it will be destroyed.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is not trivial, and I disagree with what the Member for Mount Pearl North is saying. Yes, we have many important issues, there's no question about it. We have many important issues in this province, but, Mr. Speaker, we are not saying here today that we're going to drop those important issues and focus all our attention on recycling. That's not what we're saying.

What we are saying today is that it is time for us as a government to pay some respect to the environment and to look at ways of how we can improve what we are doing today, because we need to. That's what the Member from Stephenville – Port au Port is advocating today is to start the conversation. Not to put this as more important than anything else, because we have many important things to deal with. Everyone that the Member for Mount Pearl North said are very important issues, I agree. They are all very important, but so is the environment.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, all aspects of our recycling efforts are being driven by municipalities. That is true, because I was a member of a municipality for 20 years. I know what we have to do regarding waste management and the recycling process. I'm well aware of that, and we did it. We did it, Mr. Speaker, we did it.

We did it because we did it in the best interests of the environment and the best interests of our towns and our cities. We did it because it was the right thing to do, but, Mr. Speaker, towns and cities can't do it alone. We have a role to play. Everybody, every resident in this province has a role to play when it comes to the

environment and to recycling, and that's what we're trying to do here. Is to try to get everybody involved to raise the awareness that we need to look after our environment, and we need to do a better job at our recycling process.

The Member for Mount Pearl North alluded to it that many small businesses feel that the recycling bins they may have had in place are creating more mess. That may be true, that may be true. What that tells me is we need to work with those businesses to look at a different process, look at a better process. Because the first stab at it didn't work and created more problems doesn't mean we have to drop it all together. It doesn't mean that. It means we have to look at new ways to implement it.

That's all we're saying here today, is we're willing to start that discussion with small businesses, with the gas stations, with the drive-throughs, with the fast-food outlets, with the restaurants. All we're saying is we're willing to sit down with them and look at ways of how we can improve this, because it's in all our best interests.

We're not going in there and be heavy handed like the Member suggests – not at all, it's not our intention. We respect the importance of small business in this province. We know small business is a very important part of this province, especially in the rural parts of the province. Small businesses are very important. We don't want to do anything to destroy that.

As the Minister of TCII said earlier today, we have one of the lowest small business taxes in the country, and we want to maintain that. This is not about increasing taxes. This is not about increasing taxes at all.

For the Member for Mount Pearl North to get up today and try to elaborate on how trivial this was, and the Leader of the Opposition did it in Question Period by leading off Question Period trying to say how trivial this was, really shows how they feel about the environment. They have no respect for the environment at all, none, and to say that we're trying to hijack the system, the small businesses in this province is totally ridiculous. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We have no intentions of putting a heavy burden on small business – no intentions whatsoever. What we're prepared to do is work with them to improve the systems that they have in place. They recognize how important it is to the environment. They recognize it, and they want to find a way as well to improve the system that they have, knowing full-well that what's in place right now is not working. It's not working, Mr. Speaker. All we're doing today is trying to start the conversation, to find a way together to make it work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy to get to my feet in the House whether it be Question Period, petitions, bills, private Members' motions and I don't mind getting up speaking to this; but, as my colleague spoke before, Mount Pearl North, he was pretty clear and gave a lot of precise examples and he passed his view along on this private Member's motion.

I just listened to the Member for Lab West there – we all support recycling. On a personal level, I recycle everything. I compost. Literally, I'm into it, but it's done by our municipality and it's not legislated upon you. It's done through municipalities – they bring in the program, residents by into it; it's done on a municipal level.

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

**MR. PETTEN:** Mr. Speaker, the peanut gallery is alive and well over there, but I'd like to have my few minutes to say my piece on this, as I just sat and listened intently to what the Members opposite had to say.



Municipalities usually are the ones behind bringing in this sort of program, so now we're going to legislate behaviour to a certain degree. If you own a drive-through, or restaurant or gas bar, you're going to be legislated to incur an expense by customers coming into your store.

There is a way around it. Public awareness and recycling has come a long way. The former administration, MMSB grew in leaps and bounds under their administration. Again, I'll reiterate, we believe in recycling. It's not a matter of us against recycling, absolutely not. Like I said, on a personal level, I challenge anyone else in this House to be doing any more in recycling and caring about the environment than I do, and I'm sure my colleagues around me are as well.

So on that note, that's not what we're debating. What we're debating is we're in here in this House the day before another budget, the second budget of this administration, we do not know what's coming. The public don't know what's coming. Everything has been at a standstill for the last 16 months. Everyone is wondering where they stand tomorrow evening at 3:30. And here we are bringing in a private Member's motion on recycling in restaurants, drive-throughs and gas bars. Give me break! This is ridiculous.

I know this gentlemen – he owns Tim Horton's stores. He owns several of them, and he's disgusted. He heard about this yesterday and his words were: It's disgusting. He said as a matter of fact if he's legislated, he's not going to abide by those rules because he said they tried it. They had it there in their stores. It became an eyesore – even though they're coffee shops, they're in the form of a restaurant now – with donuts and coffee cups, and everything hanging out of these bins. It wasn't working.

There are ways around it. There are other things they can do. He doesn't want any government legislating him how to look after the environment, how to encourage people to recycle. He owns that business. He runs a good operation. He'll deal with that. He doesn't need this Liberal government telling him how to recycle. None of us do.

This operation, I should say, across –

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

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

**MR. PETTEN:** – gets up in this House Monday when everyone is sitting home wondering what's in store for Thursday and the big private Member's resolution – it's outrageous.

So you read this resolution: "WHEREAS most gas stations and fast food restaurants/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 Honourable House recognizes the importance of increasing recycling in the Province, and urges the Government to consider legislation requiring recycling containers be present at fast food restaurants/drive-throughs and gas stations."

That's brilliant. That is absolutely brilliant. Everyone really felt good when they heard that private Member's motion Monday that we're in good hands. It's great. We're in good hands.

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

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

The Speaker's really having difficulty hearing the hon. Member speak. So I'd ask for co-operation from all hon. Members in this House.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

Obviously, I'm hitting a lot of nerves over there, but they can continue on. They don't want to hear this. Again, I will come back and say it again: We support recycling. We believe in recycling. We believe in the environment. This is not our issue.

Mr. Speaker, the CFIB come out yesterday – they sent a letter out to everyone here in this House. Everyone was copied on that letter. Obviously, Members opposite either decided not to read it; not to give it any attention. The CFIB is a very outspoken group representing

businesses. They are not pro-government. I don't see it. They are always on all sides of the fence; they speak their mind. If you read their letter, they want us to unanimously reject this motion because they do not want government legislating businesses on their customers' behaviour.

Just think about that. Of all the taxes this government has imposed upon all of these businesses in the last year, now they're going to demand them to have a blue recycling container by every door and every corner of every building and collect the Pepsi bottles and cardboard cups. Again, we're not opposed to the environment, but this is absolutely ridiculous. For a government opposite to get up and to be so proud of what they're presenting, it's absolutely outrageous.

There's another thing the CFIB are saying, Mr. Speaker. The motion seeks to legislate individual behaviour, over which business owners have very little control. It's an unnecessary burden on fast-food restaurants, drive-throughs and gas stations, with no guarantee the legislation will be effective in increasing recycling rates in the province.

Again, it comes back to another common theme. There's no analysis done. The general public do not trust this government, for good reason. There's not a single thing they say or do that most people have seen any real results with. It's another one of their pie in the sky; we'll try this.

We heard earlier about the asset sales. They got \$1.3 million out of \$50 million – per year now – so we should be hitting around \$70 million; we got \$1.3 million. So I guess that exudes all the confidence in the world. We all feel really good now. Now we're going to do this. But obviously they never read this letter, Mr. Speaker. This letter is not something they want to read or absorb. After reading this letter, if they really took it serious, they would have taken their private Member's motion and amended it, changed it, or threw it out. Maybe they should have just thrown it in the shredder.

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

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

**MR. PETTEN:** Anyway, here it is, we're here in the House, we're debating it – boy, I tell you, it's good; it's really good, yes. They're good today; the peanut gallery is good. They have to behave themselves tomorrow though, Mr. Speaker. There'll be a lot of tension on them tomorrow, so they'd better behave themselves tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, in some parts of our province the infrastructure is not in place for this recycling. You're all right when you're on the Northeast Avalon, and you're not all right there because this business owner I spoke to is not enthused at all and he is on the Northeast Avalon, very present in CBS.

When you move off that, if you're going legislating this sort of thing, you're putting on another burden on already burdened businesses. These businesses, you go into rural Newfoundland, you go into a gas station in rural Newfoundland, with all the other costs associated with their staffing – their profit margin is pretty thin. Now we're going to go into rural Newfoundland and we're going to tell a little business owner or a small restaurant, you have to provide this, we're going to legislate it upon you, and you're responsible for this. I don't think that's fair. I really, truly don't think it's fair, this top-down approach: We know best.

We hear it every day here in the House that the Members opposite are smarter than us, but I know that they think they're smarter than a lot of people in the province but the people in the province don't agree. We don't, they don't, but for some reason it doesn't sink in.

So all the information that comes out – these letters, you read this letter – I read all this stuff. Some of it resonates and some of it doesn't; but when I read this letter there were great quotes in it that made sense. These are the people that represent the businesses. We are advocates for our districts and businesses that operate in our districts.

The CFIB represent all independent businesses. They're the umbrella group. We are just in our own pocket in every section throughout the province. We speak up for the businesses in our area, but as a critic for – under my critic role MMSB falls, but this is a bigger issue than just

saying we're going to throw a recycling bin in. You are legislating something upon businesses that are already at the maximum levels of taxation. Like I said, their profit margins are down. Then you're going to bring an extra burden upon them, it's unfair.

Madam Speaker, this motion unfairly targets a segment of the business community, thereby implying low recycling rates in the province caused by fast-food restaurants, drive-throughs and gas stations. It will place a greater cost on those businesses at a time when they are feeling pressure of higher tax and fees.

Again, another commentary by the CFIB and it's very true. Why are you just singling out those individual businesses? Yeah, they might be the highest users of recyclables, but if you go to any business, any supermarket – it don't have to be a restaurant. Go to a hardware store.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Community centre.

**MR. PETTEN:** Community centre – you got a recycling bin. Most business owners are responsible to have the blue box. Most people have bought into recycling.

I know as a rule, personally, if I walk in somewhere and I see people throwing out pop bottles or anything that's recyclable, and the cardboard which I happen to recycle as well, it has almost become a no-no. If you're seeing someone throwing a Pepsi bottle in the garbage, it's not right.

There are a lot of people who actually go around and make it a pastime. I see people up in my district, they will actually go and collect those bottles. They will go in the roadways. They pick them up. That's what they do. They bring it to the local Green Depot.

Again, I'm going back, we're legislating on top of businesses that are already feeling the pressure of these taxes and we are going to bring a new burden on them. I'll reiterate again what my colleague from Mount Pearl North done a great job of doing so, on the eve of another budget that nobody knows and everyone are anxiously awaiting.

The fisheries are in a crisis in the province. Last week we brought inclusion. All we wanted was a summit. We never asked for them to implement anything. Give everyone an opportunity to sit in the same room and discuss this very important issue.

Members opposite were almost incredulous; they almost mocked us for it. The public hasn't felt that way. The teachers, the schools, the administration, the parents, they don't feel that way, but this group opposite do. Then they follow it up with the zinger, we're going to bring in blue bins for all the drive-throughs, all the restaurants. We're bringing in recycling, we care about the environment.

Well, I got news for all of you; I care about the environment just as much as you do. So what's the new Caramilk secret here today? What have you reinvented for me today? Nothing.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster):** Order, please!

I remind the Member speaking to direct his comments to the Chair.

Thank you.

**MR. PETTEN:** Sorry, Madam Speaker.

The Member for Terra Nova is always great. He's one of the head leaders in the peanut gallery, Madam Speaker.

The concern all MHAs should have is the encroachment of the provincial government to regional, municipal jurisdiction. This is a key point, because if you look at recycling and the blue bag programs, you go right across the province, you go outside the province. Ontario has always been – I guess Ontario was one of the leading charges in our blue bag recycling. I know back some years ago it was kind of a new initiative. It was unheard of to us here in the province. They led the charge. They were one of the ones, but it was done on a municipal level.

The Ontario government never legislated that on the people. The individual municipalities were in charge of that. They've always been in charge of

these sorts of things. That's why it just astounds me that – I know the Order Paper is thin. I know they're trying to probably find a new piece of legislation to fill the gap. That will give you a day, maybe a bit of debate time, but where there's nothing there.

I get the fact they're running thin on legislation and they're trying to get something to fill it up. I guess this is the cause, this is the reason but this is not a cause they should be legislating. They should not be going near this. This is a municipal issue. This is something municipalities do in conjunction with their individual business owners. They have to work together. Last year they got walloped with all these taxes. It's just as well to say it, that's what happened. The economy's been crushed since it happened.

I'll go back, as we talk about recycling, we talk about Tim Hortons. I have to put this point in too. Everyone thinks Tim Hortons is a licence to print money, and I've used that comment many times myself. Do you know what I was told by this owner of that Tim Hortons store that owns four of them? He's doing well. He told me the minute the gas tax was announced last year, his business – he was honest. I'm not losing money, he said, but I never grew. If anything, there was a dip. He tied it right back to the gas tax.

So now we're going to throw this new recycling initiative, this new plan, on top of him. I tell you – and this guy's a straight shooter, respected guy. I wouldn't be using his commentary if I didn't respect him. I'm sure Members opposite would give him the same respect, because he is a very honourable person. That was his commentary. If you legislate this on me, I will not follow it, and he has strong opinions on it. He doesn't agree with it, it's wrong. The CFIB believe it's wrong. We don't agree with bringing it in, legislating it on top of businesses that we believe is a municipal issue.

I'll tell you, I'll close off by saying this, Madam Speaker, we do believe in the environment. We do believe in recycling. Again, I'll say it for me and I know I can speak for my colleagues, we all do. So for the Member for Lab West to get up and make those comments, that's not fair and that's not right, we care about businesses too, Madam Speaker, and businesses right now are

going to struggle. They're struggling enough as it is and why put an unnecessary burden on them.

Thank you very much.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Lake Melville.

**MR. TRIMPER:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's interesting when you get into a debate on a Wednesday afternoon. I know a couple of times I've had a chance to speak to a private Member's motion. You come in with your thoughts and you're saying, okay, I'm going to talk about these elements and so on. Then when you listen to the Opposition, unfortunately the wheels go off the tracks and you have to – frankly, I've got to spend a couple of minutes responding to what I just heard.

It's interesting, both the Member for Mount Pearl North and my good buddy, the critic there for Conception Bay, the both of them seem to be wondering, why are we bringing this motion today? Why did my colleague from Stephenville bring this motion forward today? Well, the fact of the matter is there are a myriad of important issues to the people of this province.

I'll go right to the Member for Mount Pearl North. It was interesting; he started right off the bat with his comments. He talked about his children and them being recycling evangelists. I must say, I agree with him. I've been in several schools and it's been one of the greatest charges of positive energy, is to get into one of our grade schools and see these kids.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. TRIMPER:** For these kids, they don't care that tomorrow is a budget day. They care about their environment and they care about whatever they can do to help in that regard. Being able to pull into – further to my colleague's motion – a garage as you work your way across this great Island and not see a recycling bin, and then say

and wonder: What the heck can I do with my can? We'll just throw it out the window or throw it in the garbage and we'll forget about where that 34 per cent goes. I would suggest that kids are looking for a role to play.

Yesterday, I was with my great friend from the east end of St. John's – I've lost the name of the district – but we spoke to Vanier Elementary, and the kids there had just produced a film on climate change. Each one of those kids, when I asked them – it was in French as well, which is even more impressive. I asked each one of those kids, I said: What are you doing to protect the environment and issues around climate change? You know what; each one of those kids had an answer. It was everything from recycling to composting. They want to make a difference. For those kids, they don't care about a budget tomorrow. They care about what they can do to help with the environment.

On behalf of all the youth of this province who do care about the environment, I would say that there is a little bit of interest in what this motion has to say.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask hon. Members to respect the individual that has the floor.

**MR. TRIMPER:** That's all right. I've got lots of people around me. We can go through this.

What I'm going to talk about is the challenge that we face in this province in so many respects around the environment. I wish I had a dollar for every person who ever told me that we they hike in the woods, they bring all their garbage out. Well, if that was the case, I just wonder where all this garbage comes from. Maybe it's the moon, maybe it's Martians, I don't know; but all one has to do is walk off the road, off the beaten track and you will see litter everywhere, you will see ATV tracks and you will see all matters of degradation.

All we're saying in this motion is that we need to provide one of the key pieces in this whole puzzle, which is the recycling complex, of how

we get to a higher level of recycling. As my colleague said, we are the lowest in the country.

I can't recall how many times I've stood up here, whether it be drinking and driving, whether it be a whole myriad of issues, whether we got an F plus and so on – so many times we are the worst jurisdiction in the country. So we need to do something about it. Instead of using the MMSB, which formerly I was responsible for as a minister – great group of people, but instead of using the MMSB as a slush fund of cash that can go to wherever one of their favourite little projects might be, I suggest that maybe we could better use it for an appropriate initiative such as providing some of the infrastructure that's needed at some of these stops.

I'm just going to give folks a little bit of an idea. What we do is when you collect a container from a green depot it actually costs that green depot about 4¼ cents a container. Certainly, what everybody in the House agrees is if we were to go and install these types of recycling containers at these stops, whether it be along the TCH or whether it be at drive-throughs or any other facility, we are going to need to spend additional cash to both incent, to educate, to make them aware and, by the way, to provide that physical receptacle that needs to be there.

It's always fascinating to see – and in terms of the Member for Mount Pearl North and his reference to calling a few folks, a few businesses, well, it's interesting that there was an audit done just a few years ago. It looked at a variety of businesses and here's a few numbers that just sort of underline the seriousness of the issue and how far we need to climb.

Of some 17 gas stations that were completely audited, in terms of recycling and waste control and so on, only 1 of them had a receptacle. With some 545 gas stations in Newfoundland and Labrador, you can just imagine how many cans are going into the garbage and are not being recovered. As one of my colleagues indicated, we are only getting some 64 per cent approximately of all the materials that go out. So let's say 35 per cent or 34 per cent or so is just ending up in the field, it's ending up in the landfills and, frankly, we're not recovering it. So there's a cost to that. There's a cost to the environment and lost opportunity for everything

from schoolchildren to others who are involved in recovery.

Just to expand a little bit from the gas stations, drive-throughs as well, we looked at some 14 drive-throughs just a few years ago. Only five of those had receptacles. There are some estimated 116 in the province. So in terms of talking to businesses and saying hey, I tried those bins, they didn't work, blah, blah, blah – I would suggest that the evidence, as we've confirmed, as MMSB has confirmed across the province, it's just the opposite.

I do believe that people are genuinely sincere about caring for the environment and wanting to take steps but the reality is, frankly, we're very poor in delivery. The legislation component of this private Member's motion is about shifting attitudes. It doesn't have to come in with a hammer. As I said, MMSB can be there with some of the revenue that's raised. Let's face it, if everybody was returning the materials that we all pay a deposit on – every time you buy a six-pack of beer or a can of Coke, you're paying money to have the system have that can or that bottle come back. Well, guess what? If everybody did that, MMSB would not make a cent. It would be broke. But because of the challenge we have in this province of recovering that material, we don't get there.

I wanted to talk a little bit about influences and just what's it going to take and how important this particular piece is which is providing the recycling bins. So I look at influences, why would people recycle? First of all, how much money are you going to get if you get your materials back? How complicated is the program? Can I understand it? Are you aware of the program?

What the motion is referring to is what we call out-of-home recycling. Right now we have programs in MMSB that target homes and schools, but once you get out of the home and so on, it's a whole lost opportunity. I get so frustrated, as my colleague who proposed the motion, that we're just not taking advantage of opportunities. Frankly, it's really about collecting materials and grabbing that waste stream.

Some other influences that are really important, and this is why the idea of the gas bar came up, is convenience. If I see a receptacle there with those nice little arrows and the recycle logo that everybody recognizes, I might think to put a can in there.

Access to vehicles to transport the materials; weather plays an important role; access to curbside; prohibition bans – and this is where the legislation is going, the propensity to do the right thing for the environment – and finally just complacency. I know so many times you're talking to somebody and you just see them toss a can, throw a cigarette butt, whatever it is, it just seems to be saying one thing, but doing another – which I find extremely frustrating.

I want to go back to the schools. I want to go back to a fascinating little session that I was at with St. Paul's Elementary and the great Town of Gander last fall. At that situation we launched a broad – we went out across dozens of schools with a recycle-at-school program. It was fascinating. As a minister, I showed up, comms people were there, everything was all set up – well, guess who ran the press conference? The kids. The kids led the whole thing.

We had TV, we had the radio and we had print, and the kids ran the whole show. I was introduced, spoke my bit, but the kids did something really interesting, and I've spoken about it before and I still would like to see it happen, is they ran the demonstration on how to recycle materials. We all think we understand what to do and where to sort it, but frankly, I would suggest most of us don't. If we could go to one of the cafeterias in either the East Block or the West Block, you would see some of the challenges and people just sit and stare, and if they don't want to sit and think about it, everything goes into the garbage bin. This is all part of the education and this is all part of the funds that are raised, frankly, through the MMSB, that could be better used to programs to incent and help recover that waste instead of just being thrown out, as has gone on in the past.

I guess I wanted to go back to what's really bothered me here with what I've heard today. Looking at some of the numbers, here's another survey where people said, how many of you recycle. And I have numbers here for example –

this was just done a few years ago – for St. John’s, 96 per cent of the households said they recycle; Mount Pearl, 97 per cent; Paradise, 90 per cent; and so on.

Asked again about recycling at work, how many of them recycle. Well, it’s got a similar range of 77 to 94 per cent. But the fact of the matter is once you get beyond that little milieu of control and knowing you’ve got some infrastructure and so on, it just falls apart. We need to find a way to get to the adults, to get to the people who are using all of these out-of-home opportunities to make sure that we’re going to actually recover these materials.

Of some 265 million containers that are sold in this province a year, we only recover 170 million. When I go back to that audit that was done at the (inaudible) for example, it was estimated that we only did some –

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Order, please!

Pursuant to Standing Order 49, any noise that’s disrupting the House is unparliamentary. I’ve asked Members for their co-operation a couple of times. If you have to be named, you will not speak tomorrow.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

**MR. TRIMPER:** Thank you for the protection. I don’t often get that.

I’m not quite sure where I was, Madam Speaker, but I think what I would say is that another comment I heard from the Member for Mount Pearl was this idea of carrot versus the stick. He was describing the private Member’s motion of today as somehow a club or a stick that was going to be used to incent.

Well, as with the federal government’s carbon tax, as with other initiatives that need to be legislated, sometimes we’re just not doing enough. It’s important to at least have, as with a carbon tax, a backstop of inaction. When I

would look at the idea of putting in receptacles and asking businesses to support us and co-operate with us in this program, well, maybe we do need to legislate. Maybe we do need to get started, because as you can see from the feedback that some of the Members got from their little survey, it seemed to me that there wasn’t a strong area of co-operation. I am not against business. I come from that background, I perfectly understand.

Again, I’ll go back to my very important point I want to make, is that there are funds that are generated through MMSB that can be very closely and very well-directed and allocated toward supporting this program. I bet you we can soon pick up our own socks in terms of where we sit in the country and in terms of how we sit in terms of recovery of materials.

I think I’m just about done. I’m just looking at my remarks. I did have a couple more examples. Convenience stores, for example, are another one where we had some 13 that were looked at thoroughly. Only three of these had receptacles. We have 150 of these in the province. Similar trends exist for, whether it be a baseball field, a skateboard park, golf courses, walking trails and so on. We just don’t have the infrastructure out there.

So as I go to conclude, I would say as we head out across to our districts this weekend, if you’re driving, when you go to fill up, those of you who are on gasoline, by the way, instead of electricity, you could take a look to see if you see those recycling bins, because I suggest you probably don’t. Or if you see them, they are, as the folks have indicated, maybe filled with banana peels and everything else. So education, awareness and the physical infrastructure is what we need to have in place to make sure this is all going to work.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak, and I look forward to supporting this motion.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I'm very happy to stand and to speak to this private Member's motion. Recycling, garbage, the environment, it's all really important to us; but, also, the whole issue of stewardship for our environment is very, very complex.

Also, even the issue of recycling is very complex. One would think it would be as easy as, oh, I have a plastic pop bottle and I'll put it in a recycling bin. If one were to follow the journey of that plastic pop bottle all the way from its production of the bottle itself, the filling of the bottle, the transportation of the bottle, what kind of plastic is used in that bottle, then how it ends up on the store shelf, then it maybe ends up in someone's home or it ends up being sold at a gas station or a drive-through and then the contents are consumed. Then where does it go? To follow that journey – and it all depends on who is the consumer of that pop bottle and where that bottle ultimately ends up. I think that's a little bit of what we're speaking about here today.

I've read the private Member's motion and I believe the intent was noble. I do believe the private Member's motion in and of itself is somewhat problematic. The private Member's Motion, I would like to read it again, Madam Speaker.

“WHEREAS most gas stations and fast-food restaurants/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;” – which is probably true and which points to other problems that we might want to talk about because that's a shame.

It's particularly difficult and problematic when you're living on an Island. How do you deal with your waste? How do you deal with recyclable materials? How do we deal with our organic waste? How do we deal with paper waste? How do we deal with metal waste? How do we deal with electronic waste? We're on an Island.

Then if we do not have any infrastructure to deal with that, to recycle those elements, that means it has to go off Island. So there's a lot of – it's very complex, not an easy solution. Again, one would think it should be easy. Intuitively, one would think it's easy but it's not that easy.

“WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has the” – highest recycling rate – “lowest recycling rate in Canada;” Wouldn't it be nice if it was in fact the highest?

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House recognizes the importance of increasing recycling in the Province,” – that's noble. I believe everybody in this House and probably most people across the province believe that's noble and that's important, the importance of increasing recycling in the province – “and urges the Government to consider legislation requiring recycling containers be present at fast-food restaurants/drive-throughs and gas stations.”

Well, one of the issues that really struck me in this particular private Member's motion is the drive-throughs. Usually when people go through a drive-through, whatever they buy they take with them. They are not consuming them at the drive-through. They may have a cup of coffee and maybe some food that's packaged in paper and maybe Styrofoam – that's another issue we need to be talking about. Maybe a can of pop or maybe a plastic bottle of pop, but usually what happens is people purchase it in the drive-through and off they go. They don't consume it there. So they're not going to be placing it in recycle bins there. If anything, if there's some kind of bin there people may throw out their garbage, but that's probably not the best place for recycling bins.

Again, I believe there was probably a noble intent in this private Member's motion. It's been interesting, Madam Speaker, to see the type of private Members' motions that we have seen over the past year. Some of them have been a little more substantive than others in terms of the effects and the benefits to the people of the province, but we do know it is incumbent upon us as environmental stewards to really take recycling seriously. It is incumbent upon us in this House as legislators to see what is our role and what is it we can do to ensure that we are no



longer the lowest recyclers in the country but let's be the highest, let's be the best.

I believe there are other issues, environmental issues that perhaps may be more attainable or have more impact on our role as environmental stewards in the province that we are not debating here today. Again, for recycling coming through fast food, buying fast food, there's very little. There's very little in the packaging of fast food that can be recycled and that's a problem; that in and of itself is a problem.

Put up all the bins you want, but all that you can toss in there is a can or a plastic bottle. It's all the over packaging that cannot be recycled, and that's really a problem. Wouldn't it be great if we could be looking at that specifically and let's look at the whole issue – let's take a broader look at the issue of recycling.

I know that some of the concern – it's heartbreaking when we drive our highways or when we drive in our municipalities to see a coffee cup that's been tossed out the window or to see a chip bag that's been tossed out the window. I could not imagine rolling down – many of us couldn't because we have been educated so much about this. Imagine rolling down your window, taking your last gulp of your coffee and throwing your cup out the window.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It happens.

**MS. ROGERS:** It happens. It really happens. I couldn't imagine doing that, but there are people who do it and we know that is a problem throughout the province. So how do we best deal with that? Perhaps that's what we should be talking about: How do we best deal with that?

That is not the basis of our recycling problem; that's garbage. So we need to look at the difference between recycling and garbage. But again, for fast food, it's maybe a tin can, it's maybe a plastic bottle, it's maybe some cardboard that's used in packaging; but, for the most part, most of that stuff is not recyclable, which is too bad.

There are other issues that really are important around our environmental stewardship. There are so many very, very important ones. So again,

it would be my hope that that would be something we would be focusing on today, because it is so important and we have an obligation. Some of the issues that I think are really pressing in our province right now around environmental issues, because recycling is about environmental issues – recycling comes with a cost to the consumer, to municipalities, to businesses. There's a cost there and we're not really talking about that.

I would just like to point out the interconnectedness of environmental issues and some of the issues that perhaps we could be debating here today is the issue of methylmercury and how it's found downstream of the two hydroelectric projects on the Churchill River. That's a really important environmental issue. The Grieg agriculture project, how are we going to deal with that as a province? It's the promise of jobs, of good-paying, multiple jobs in an area where jobs are really needed, but the implications, the incredible, irreversible environmental damage that can be done, if this is not done properly, is incredibly important for this province.

We need the jobs; we need the industry. But imagine that what Grieg is proposing to do here in Newfoundland and Labrador would not be permitted in its home country of Norway and in its own home country, they would have to pay tens of millions of dollars in licence fees to be able to do what they propose to do here. We're not charging them that. We're going to give them \$45 million to undergo aquaculture practices that they can't do in their own country, and it's going to affect our environment. Again, we have an incredible environmental stewardship obligation.

What about the use of pesticides in our province, particularly the lethal Tordon one, also known as Agent White, and the use of the neonics on crops like canola? That's a big problem. That could put our pristine honeybee population at risk. I know most of us here in this House know that our honeybee population is among the rarest in the world. We have something very, very valuable here.

There's no sign of the natural areas system plan, which yet another government promised to initiate. We have the lowest percentage of

protected natural areas in the country. How heartbreaking is it when we see garbage in our natural areas from people who've been hiking or camping. Some of it is materials that are recyclable. Wouldn't it be great to ensure that there are as many opportunities to recycle as possible, rather than seeing oh, my gosh, the beer bottles, the pop bottles that are thrown on the side of the road?

So again I would like to posit that I believe that the Member for Stephenville, in fact –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Port au Port.

**MS. ROGERS:** Yes, I'm going to get that right. Hang on, folks. That the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port, his intention was noble in this particular private Member's motion; I do believe that. I believe that he is concerned about the environment, both in his own community and throughout the whole province, but I'm not so sure that this is the appropriate solution.

How about the whole issue of carbon tax and the offshore industry? That's something we could be talking about here today. It would be better if government, on all levels, and if communities and individuals and families – like the Member for Mount Pearl North, who talked about his kids being environmental recycling fanatics, was it?

**MR. KENT:** Evangelists.

**MS. ROGERS:** Evangelists. Wouldn't it be great if we could all do that? Wouldn't it just be great?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Amen.

**MS. ROGERS:** Amen. Amen, he says.

Recycling is so important. We all know how important it is, but how complex it is. It's not simple. Recycling diverts solid waste from our landfills, and it is an essential part of the Provincial Solid Waste Management Strategy.

The Multi-Materials Stewardship Board was established to administer various recycling and diversion programs and to do public education. Maybe we need to do some more public

education, but I believe we don't see as many cups tossed out the window, or chip bags tossed out the window, or burger wrappers tossed out the window as we used to. I believe in the past 15 years or so, I don't see as much debris like that on our roadways as I used to.

I do believe there is a lot of really good work being done in the schools around recycling, and that our young people are taking leadership on it. They feel empowered and proud of what they are doing in the areas of recycling. I really believe that. The MMSB and the strategy came into being because of our poor record in recycling.

In 2002, we diverted only 7 per cent of solid waste from landfills through recycling. It's changed now. By 2013, we had reached 27.6 per cent diverted. It's not enough. It was not enough, but it certainly was a jump from 7 per cent to 27.6 per cent. That's a big jump. We should be proud of that.

In 2015, the government moved the deadline to 2025 so that more provincial resources had been needed to implement the province's Waste Management Strategy. We have to do better. It's clear, we have to do better. For some people it's hard. Old habits die hard, but we have to work in partnerships with private industry, with education, with our public institutions.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order please!

**MS. ROGERS:** I tell you –

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order please!

I remind the hon. Member –

**MS. ROGERS:** How did that happen, Madam Speaker?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** – her time for speaking has expired.

**MS. ROGERS:** But anyways, we do have an obligation to work with our public institutions.

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

**MS. ROGERS:** There's a lot of work to be done there.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I'm certainly happy to stand here on private Members' resolution day and speak to the PMR that's been entered by the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port. I can say it is one that when I first saw it, as someone that drives across this province regularly and sees the lack of recycling opportunities, it's something that has crossed my mind in the past. I applaud the Member for bringing this idea forward; bringing an idea to this House that is worthy of debate in this House.

What I want to do is just speak to the PMR itself and then I have a number of points to make both on I guess the content of the PMR, as well as the process behind PMRs. The fact is the PMR is quite succinct and says that:

“WHEREAS most gas stations and fast-food restaurants ... have no recycling bins available ...; and

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

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House recognizes the importance of increasing recycling ... and urges the Government to consider legislation requiring recycling containers ....”

So it's a very straightforward premise. The fact is that we do have the lowest rate of recycling in the country, which is something we need to address, and I don't think any Member of this House would disagree with that. I do note the Member for Mount Pearl North said something about addressing our failings but I would note this record comes from their time in government. The fact is we're dealing with the fact that we do have the lowest rate of recycling.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Now, the Member is calling relevance on me talking about recycling. Again, I find it difficult – sorry, that's the Leader of the Opposition, the PC. Again, if he wants to stand up and call relevance, stand up and call relevance and tell me why I'm not being relevant, but he's going to sit down there and chirp. If he wanted to he could stand up and speak to this but he'll choose not to.

We are talking about the failings of his administration and his predecessors. We have the lowest rate of recycling. I'd be ashamed too, because this is on his record. I would be ashamed too.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** What number?

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

If I could have a moment on a point of order without being interrupted by the Government House Leader opposite; under section 48, earlier this afternoon in this very same debate the Opposition House Leader made it quite clear to the Chair the importance of sticking to the relevance of the bill. Now in his own words he's going –

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

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

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

Today, in his own comments he is going way outside the boundaries of what's relevant directly to the bill and I would encourage the Chair to ensure that the speaker remains relevant particularly to the bill here this afternoon.

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

I believe the hon. Member was speaking to recycling, and I understand that's what the private Member's resolution is about.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Hopefully, if the Member continues to listen he'll hear what is absolutely relevant here because what he just said was absolutely irrelevant, I can guarantee you that.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** The fact is, we're – I hear more commentary from the peanut gallery, but I would be ashamed too of the fact that one of the hallmarks of their legacy –

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

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** One of the hallmarks of their legacy, amongst many others, is that we do have the lowest rate of recycling. So I would be ashamed too, if I was a Member on the other side.

Again, speaking to this PMR, what we have here is a private Member's resolution. It's an opportunity for a Member of a caucus on any side to stand in this House and bring a resolution to debate an issue they feel is important to them or to the province. Now, this Member has done this.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What a member.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Now, the Members on the other side – and I will say the Member for St. John's Centre, I applaud what she had to say. Whether she agreed or disagreed, she actually spoke to this bill, and that's what it's about.

Do you know what? In fact, I will commend the NDP who had one of the most relevant private Member's resolutions that I've seen in this House, was the one on an All-Party Committee on Mental Health.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Exactly. I've given her credit when I was on that side and I'll do it right here. That was the essence of a private Member's resolution, which is an opportunity

for a non-Cabinet Member to stand in the House and present a motion of importance to the people of this province. Now, the Member has done that.

Both of the Members on the other side, including the leader who took the first question during Question Period and talked about why we shouldn't have done this PMR, both of the Members stood up and questioned why we are doing this PMR. They don't understand the purpose of PMRs.

I took the opportunity to look through a number of the PMRs they did while they were in government. I can guarantee you that virtually everyone was handed down from on high from the premier's office at the time, whether it was that premier or the one before him or the one before him or the one before him.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** It was something, and the words in almost every PMR right at the end was the same thing.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** It said we –

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

I ask the Member to bring his comments to the private Member's resolution before the House.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** This private Member's resolution is asking us to recognize the importance of recycling whereas the PMRs I've seen in the past said we should support the government in doing what they're already doing. Again, we could have talked about a PMR on Muskrat Falls but maybe we'll have another chance to talk about that.

We're going to talk about recycling. This is a topic they do not feel is important. They don't feel is important. The Member for Mount Pearl North said he surveyed the members of Mount Pearl North and they had an issue with it. I can tell you, someone that drives across the province on a regular basis it's not something that all the Members over there do. Some of them haven't been outside, not very often. Not very often they

get outside, but as someone that drives across – and I've been to gas stations. I've been to fast-food restaurants. You have to stop there. In many cases, there's a garbage receptacle, but there's nowhere to put your recycling. In many cases, if you look at the garage, it's filled with recycling. So I have to commend the Member for standing here and introducing a proposal to make something better.

Now, the Members on the other side have an issue with that. I don't know why they have an issue with that. They have an opportunity during their PMRs to bring something of importance to this House. I'll give them an opportunity to talk about that.

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

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Again, I can hear the chirping over there. I would be ashamed because this record is on them. They have many legacies from their government. One of them is the lowest rate of recycling. The other one is the multi-billion-dollar deficit. The other one is Muskrat Falls. Yes, I'd have a hard time standing up if I were over there and asking questions, I would have a hard time.

Because they stood here during their PMRs and said, let's support the government. And it was fluffy stuff that was driven from on-high, saying let's commend the government for something they're already doing. Here we have an opportunity – we've empowered backbenchers to bring forward motions on things like recycling, on things like the MMSB, on things like improving the future of this province for our children. I don't know why the Members opposite have an issue.

In fact, the Member for Mount Pearl North stood up and said, I think it's important, and my kids talk about how important it is, but I'm going to spend the rest of my time talking about why it's not important. Again, I would ask that he go home and talk to his kids and say why he is going to vote against it. That's what I would suggest because this is something important.

What it's saying here, it is saying government should consider legislation, but we should

consider other measures as well. We should consider anything that's going to increase the rate of recycling in this province. I commend the other side, the NDP, for trying to work with us on that, and we would be happy to listen to ideas. But no, the Members of the PCs – the Member for CBS stood up back there and said, well, this is brilliant. The most condescending attitude I have ever heard towards a private Member's resolution, but they wouldn't know that, because they never had an opportunity to do it while they were on this side because they were told what to say. That's why they all stood up and voted for Muskrat Falls. That's why they all stood up. They never had an opportunity to be empowered, and what we have here is a group that is empowered. In fact, their backbenchers were hoodwinked.

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

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Hoodwinked! But again, we have a backbencher putting in a PMR on recycling here. Again, they are over talking about relevance. I can guarantee you that none of them have been relevant today. Not the one of them. We are talking about recycling; we are talking about making things better. I support the Member for Stephenville –

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I would suggest when the other side stands up to vote against recycling in the province, when they sit down, they should really question what they are doing here and whether they are trying to make things better for the province

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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

I appreciate having the opportunity to rise for a few minutes. I know we're short in the afternoon and there's only about four or five minutes left

before the mover will get a chance to speak again and close debate on this private Member's resolution that's brought before the House this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, good discussion here this afternoon by many Members who brought forward a number of points. I've listened to what Members have had to say about this resolution – a resolution that is urging government to consider legislation requiring recycling containers be present at fast-food restaurants/drive-throughs and gas stations.

I, as well, have taken some time to speak with business owners and other citizens regarding this private Member's resolution. Actually I shared with it a number of people and asked, without really any provocation at all, what their viewpoint and belief was on it. An overwhelming response was interesting, because it was a very consistent response from people who couldn't believe that on the eve of a budget that a matter of this nature would be brought forward encouraging government to put it in legislation.

What the resolution is, it is not about the merits of recycling. We believe in recycling; there are no two ways about that. It's asking businesses to install recycling containers, when the business doesn't have or have limited control – if no control, but limited control, at best, on how those containers would be used.

I spoke to one individual who owns a number of fast-food outlets and said to him: What do you think of this? He said they have tried, and the chain that he's involved with has tried in Nova Scotia – probably one of the most progressive provinces in Canada when it comes to recycling. He's words were, 20 years ahead where Newfoundland and Labrador – even today, way ahead of where Newfoundland and Labrador is and been long ahead of most every province. He said they've tried everything to make recycling containers work in drive-throughs and in their restaurants and there are numerous problems.

When a person pulls up in a drive-through in their car, lots of people have a grocery bag in the back seat of their car and they'll put their chip bags in it, they'll put their used gum in it and they'll put their coffee cups in it, yesterday's

paper and so on. When they drive up and there's a receptacle, if it's a garbage receptacle or recycling receptacle, they quite often have the tendency to pull it out and throw it in the garbage. So recycling, in those recycling efforts, never ends up going to recycling because of the contamination that occurs in those recycling bins.

What they have now in this particular outlet is they have those devices, those receptacles, but not in the drive-through. So people actually have to get out of their car, walk over to them, or as they are leaving and coming from the business have those put in.

A lot of talk about waste on our highways this afternoon; the resolution could have been requiring those businesses to have waste receptacles located on the premises instead of at the drive-throughs, but at a restaurant, gas stations and so on. And I've been to – actually in Baie Verte Junction a few years ago, I stopped at a business and I had empty coffee cups and I went to try and deposit them and the people working there wouldn't accept them and said no, we don't take garbage from other places. I said when I buy a cup of coffee here and move on, what do I do it. That's up to you. Actually one person said there why don't you throw it in the woods like everybody else does. I was pretty disgusted.

Maybe the motion should have been install garbage receptacles, or waste receptacles, but it's not that. It's about recycling and putting another burden on business which is going to be costly to them to manage and sort and have to do the things when they have no control. According to this one business owner I mentioned a few minutes ago who said that it gets all contaminated, especially in the drive-through circumstance. It's gets contaminated because you can't control what people put in them. People throw half a cup of coffee, or a half-eaten hamburger, or half-eaten food, or their gum in there and the recyclables are no longer recyclable material and have to go to landfill.

That's the problem with this suggestion is we're burdening business to have a facility which they can't control how it operates unless they have someone stand guard on it, or do it through a staff person. The other problem is our windy

conditions. In a drive-through, someone throws something out into the receptacle, it's not unusual for it to blow away, or it doesn't reach there or it falls on the ground. In coffee shops where they have drive-throughs – I'm sure we've all seen it, where they have recycling bins and garbage receptacles and people are throwing stuff, it's coffee, it gets mouldy and it smells. It's not really what you want to have around a place where you're ordering fresh food and hot coffee.

The same with the burger outlets and so on – coffee and burger outlets are the most common drive-throughs. Even with the burger outlets, someone takes their garbage, they throw it out, it falls on the ground and they drive on. That's why they don't work. That's why many of them have steered away from it.

So, Mr. Speaker, our party, our side of the House, and I'm sure everyone in the House here fully supports the concept of recycling. The problem is forcing businesses to require people to recycle doesn't work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Quite the debate this afternoon – for those just joining, I'll try and give a quick reference to how we started. I introduced the motion on Monday that stated the following:

“WHEREAS most gas stations and fast food restaurants/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 Honourable House recognizes the importance of increasing recycling in the Province, and urges the Government to consider legislation requiring recycling containers to be present at fast food restaurants/drive-throughs and gas stations.”

I had to announce those words a bit clearer because I think the Opposition missed these words throughout the afternoon. Unfortunately, they'll have to sit there now and listen as I really try and explain to them, again, what the spirit of the motion was.

Key words: The House recognizes the importance of increasing recycling. We have the lowest rate in the province –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** The country.

**MR. FINN:** Or sorry, the lowest rate in the country. Our province has lowest rate in the country.

So what I've done here today and I think I've actually achieved my goal. My goal, Mr. Speaker, was to start the conversation about a problem that exists in our province and see if we can't discuss ways to come up with creative solutions to challenge and change this problem. That was the intent today.

It's caused enough ruckuses back and forth with Members. I had the Member for Mount Pearl North say this motion is ridiculous, the timing of the budget – the budget is going to come down tomorrow; you've known that for two weeks. I have an opportunity as a private Member in this House to bring in any resolution that I see fit.

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

**MR. FINN:** It just so happens that it was my turn to bring in a motion today. I am not naive to the fact that the budget will come in tomorrow. What's quite ironic as a private Member, for those listening, because everyone in this House would know, I do not have the opportunity to ask questions in Question Period, nor do I have the opportunity to answer questions in Question Period. That occurs between our Cabinet ministers and the Opposition Members. They get a very short window to ask questions in Question Period, for those listening – a very short window. But they decided to take the first question of the day and take strike at something to suggest how silly it is to discuss recycling here today.

If today is not the day we discuss it, when is the day? Because the legacy of 12 years of the PC

administration is the fact that we have the lowest recycling rate in the country. I said it earlier; I am not here suggesting we burden businesses. You did not listen if you thought that was the case. I suggested we start to talk about this. I said we should consider legislation. I further said that any consideration of legislation would involve consultation with stakeholders.

They wanted to reference that the motion is lazy. If the motion was so lazy, I'll ask the Member from Mount Pearl North, why did the Opposition not take a moment to think about amending the motion? If the motion has to do everything with recycling –

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

**MR. FINN:** – but somehow we end up talking about diverting waste and contaminating waste. The Leader of the PC Party just stood up on his feet and said most of the waste gets contaminated. Yes, in fact, it does. That's why I brought it up so we could have the conversation about it. There are a number of avenues that exists for creative opportunities. Where they see challenges Mr. Speaker, I see solutions.

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

**MR. FINN:** Just because this wasn't important enough over the past 12 years to address doesn't mean we can't have this conversation today; that's all I wanted to do.

I want to reference something else because they did reference they received a letter from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and so did I. I think they tried to read part of the letter. I might have missed part of the Member for Mount Pearl North. I took the time to call the provincial director from the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses and had a great chat with him this morning.

While we did agree to disagree on some avenues and while he's not here to defend himself, I won't get into too many particulars, I explained to him the exact thing. The spirit of the motion is to bring up something where we've identified a challenge and we're looking for opportunities to see if we can't solve this problem.

One of the big opportunities we have as a government is utilizing some of the resources we have available to us. We have an opportunity to utilize the MMSB. I would encourage any business who is struggling or thinking about how they can look at ways to divert their waste properly or who want to look at ways of recycling to reach out and contact the MMSB.

I just need to bring this up. Since the beverage container program came into effect since 1997, 2.4 billion beverage containers, that's 151,000 metric tons of materials, was diverted from our landfills – 151,000 metric tons, can you imagine? So I'm bringing that up – and while this does do with recycling, there was mention from the Member of St. John's Centre and I thank her for her comments today. They seem supportive and I look forward to her support when we go to vote on the motion, but she brought up the exact fact why I also brought up this private Member's resolution today.

She was saying that a lot of the packaging and stuff from the fast-food establishments and the drive-throughs, a lot of that can't be recycled. Again, that's a very good point. We're talking about waste management; we're talking about recycling. To the point from the PC Leader, well, what about when we containment this and now we can't recycle. I'm talking about diverting waste to our landfills. I'm talking about how can we look at ways to divert waste.

What was brought up today in addition to the MMSB was some of their partnerships with schools. The Member for Mount Pearl North mentioned his kids in school recycling, certainly very proud. Our young people seem to have the ability to conceptualize these ideas and bring them home to mom and dad. They really do. They say, look, what we did today, and did you know that we can recycle this.

We had schools recycle some 14 million containers annually, which equates to \$1.5 million – 14 million containers from schools. That's 270 schools in this province, close to 70,000 students that are doing and partaking in these initiatives. Do you know what they do with these funds, Mr. Speaker? They use it to fund their breakfast programs, their sports programs. When I think about that, I reflect back – I spent five years coaching high school basketball at



Stephenville High School, and the MMSB program, with matching funds on recycling, was one of the best initiatives that I could avail of as a coach of a team.

If we went around and we collected – whether it be beer bottles, and we collected all the recycling bags we could. If we came up with \$300, we got \$300 back. For a team travelling from Stephenville High to Gander Collegiate, or anywhere across this province, \$600 is a night's accommodation in hotel rooms for 15 students. It was a phenomenal opportunity, not only encouraging our young people – and their families at home would do the same. They would continue to recycle.

So we have in place right now the province, people who are concerned about recycling, people who do it at home and our schools support it. But we don't have an opportunity for our travelling public, who are going across our highways – and again, I'm talking about promoting a green and healthy environment. We don't have an opportunity for them to utilize that. I understand it is a challenge for businesses. That's the intent of starting the conversation. I never intended this motion to suggest that we would clobber business and burden them in some fashion. That was really never the intent of the motion.

I'm just taking a moment here to collect my thoughts. It was a really hard to listen to some of the stuff I had today from the other side. I brought in this motion. It was referenced that it was silly, and how did it pass the test. How did the government caucus decide that this was going to be important today? The government caucus supported me in deciding that it was important today.

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

**MR. FINN:** I understand that this motion involves numerous departments of government. There is jurisdiction that lies with the Minister of Service NL with respect to regulations. There is jurisdiction that relies with the Minister of Environment. There is jurisdiction that would rely with the Finance Department, the Minister of Finance. There is jurisdiction that would rely just about everywhere, if you actually think about. So even in the spirit of knowing that,

none of these ministers in my caucus stopped me from bringing this in because it might be controversial. No one said, gee, John, we have to be careful here – no, no, no. The intent is to start a discussion. I honestly think that I achieved that today.

I thought about the private Members' resolutions and how this is our unique opportunity to have our voices heard, and if they're so inclined to suggest that this could have been done differently, they will get – I'll let everyone who's listening now – they will get their opportunity for their private Member's resolution. They will get every opportunity.

Last week they introduced a private Member's resolution about holding a summit on inclusive education directly after we sent a very highly talented and educated taskforce to just about every corner of the province to talk about inclusive education – just after we finished doing that. They're saying now, well – it was almost like they said: the Minister of Justice had a summit, that's a half-decent idea. Maybe we should think about doing – yeah, okay, we should.

Well, you had 12 years to think about these ideas and you never did it. This is a PC administration that is upset with my private Member's resolution. The same administration brought in a private Member's resolution on full-day kindergarten, after spending millions to get it ready to come in, brought in a private Member's resolution to support it, passed it in the House of Assembly, and then when we inherit the ability to bring in full-day kindergarten, they now all of a sudden want to pull us back because it's convenient for them.

This private Member's resolution is about sparking a conversation for change, and it's about encouraging people in our province to be concerned. No way, shape or form would I expect any business to be picking up this overnight.

What I will tell you is, again, where they see the challenges, I see some solutions. I reference the sports and opportunities –

**MR. LETTO:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. FINN:** Opportunities for solutions, I should say. Thank you to the Member for Lab West, who also spoke in support of the motion today.

Opportunities for solutions; think about the benefits. If you're a business owner and you support right now a minor hockey program and you sponsor them to go on their tournament, and you sponsor a high school team to go on a tournament, there are ways to partner with businesses. We have non-profit groups and organizations throughout the province.

Community Youth Network; I know in my district, the district I'm fortunate to represent, Stephenville – Port au Port, the Community Youth Network spends hours taking tabs off pop tins to support initiatives for building wheelchairs. We have a number of organizations – there's a great organization in Corner Brook that employs individuals with disabilities to encourage them to recycle.

If you look at the opportunities from a business perspective, to say that you're a leader and you're looking at spearheading this cause, and you want to encourage an environmentally friendly environment and encourage a clean area for our province, I think there are plenty of opportunities here. The reality is this is about just starting the conversation.

I have to remind the Members opposite, because we will vote now in just shy of a few moments, and based on the commentary I've heard from today, I'm led to believe they won't support the motion. I still think there's time for them to reconsider, because the motion was all about considering legislation, of which we would certainly look at reaching out to stakeholders and reaching out to anybody who wants to lend their voice to this cause.

The reference is also about jurisdictions, and how can we override municipalities or not, or where's the jurisdiction? The reality is we have a number of municipalities who do quite well with recycling.

The Member for Mount Pearl North would be probably shocked to know, the individual who didn't want to support the motion, Mount Pearl leads the province in recycling. It seriously does.

The statistics from the MMSB show that. So you represent a district of which leads the province in recycling but you don't want to support a motion to encourage it for others. It's almost laughable, Mr. Speaker, it really is.

Again, the idea today was to start a conversation. I think that while there are a number of scenarios whereby increasing waste bins or increasing recycling baskets, people can say it only creates a bigger mess. There's going to be problems with filtering it and sorting through it. Of course there is. There are challenges with every new initiative that comes forward.

I cannot think of many new initiatives, be it a government, be it a business, be it a non-profit group, I cannot think of new initiatives that don't present challenges. Just because they present challenges, does not mean they are not important, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. FINN:** We have the lowest recycling rate in the country. There are a number of things in the country we wish we could be better at. We wish our health care outcomes could be better. We wish our educational outcomes could be better. We're looking at initiatives around mental health. That does not make, any one initiative could be argued any day of the week is more important than the other. The fact remains, it does not take away the importance of this issue. It doesn't matter if today is April 5 or December 25, the issue is still important.

I'm proud to have brought it in today, Mr. Speaker. I think that there would be a great opportunity here to look at multiple departments in government, to look at officials, to consult with industry to see if there are ways we can overcome this challenge and work towards achieving, and for our province to have the second lowest population in the country but somehow lead the country with the lowest recycling rates to me is appalling. I think we can do better, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very pleased to bring this motion in today. I look forward to unanimous support in the House of Assembly.

Thank you very much.

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

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

Is the House ready for the question?

All those in favour of the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

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

Call in the Members.

### Division

**MR. SPEAKER:** Are the Whips ready?

Order, please!

Are the Whips ready?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Yes.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those in favor of the motion, please rise.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the ayes 27; the nays 10.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I declare the motion carried.

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

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

It being Private Members' Day, this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 o'clock.