



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

---

Volume XLVIII

SECOND SESSION

Number 16

---

HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA*

Wednesday

10 May 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Admit strangers.

**Orders of the Day**

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, Concurrence Motion, Resource Committee.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** It is indeed, on this Wednesday morning, an honour to stand in this House and again have a discussion around the budget and debate, particularly the Estimates of the Resource Committee. I had the privilege of being a Member of that Committee, and I had the privilege of being Chair for a number of years. I must acknowledge the present Chair, the Member for Baie Verte – White Bay –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Green Bay.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Green Bay, sorry; I am a bit off colour sometimes – who did a great job. There was some great dialogue, particularly I enjoyed yesterday with the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and his officials – Labour, I should note too. The Labour division is a very important part of that department that's been added – where we got some good information.

We had some good dialogue. It went beyond just the budget numbers; it also talked about some potential policies, what is working, what potentially may need to be changed, and what we need to keep on our radar to ensure that we not only get the best return on the investment that's outlined in the budget, but that the taxpayers, the services that are being provided are indeed in line with exactly what they need at this point.

So there was good dialogue. I had a few jabs back and forth with the Minister of Education on some things, but that's part of the process. He

gave as good as he took. The point here was to get the information out so that the general public would know exactly what's being done and what's being voted on in Estimates.

That's the process here; the Estimates is an outlined process where the Opposition and Members of the Committee, other Members of the Committee who are also part of the government side, get an opportunity to ask for clarification and explanations, particularly any changes that may have occurred, or the approach of how that money is going to be spent for the betterment of those who avail of those services or the betterment of the taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It was a good opportunity to get that dialogue going, get some information out there. We're still hopeful we'll get some of the other information that wasn't available immediately so that we can go through it, and that will drive exactly when we acknowledge the good things that the government are doing, and if we still have some queries or questions that the general public would like clarification on. That process works. It's an open, democratic process.

My understanding is it's perhaps one of the most inclusive ones that we have anywhere in the Western world when it comes to transparency and accountability and getting the information that's necessary. It stays on the record forever and a day so you can go back and debate exactly what's there.

That process, I'm glad – and I know it was a number of other departments that the critics and other Members of the Committee had an opportunity to be engaged in, get the information and ask for clarification. It also gives an opportunity to get to meet some of the senior staff. Some you've only known by name because they are the title or you've sent an email to. It gives an opportunity to put a name with a face and understand exactly what their roles are. That becomes very clear and it's a great opportunity.

For somebody like me who's been around the bureaucracy for the last 30 years, a lot of these people I've either worked with or I've known. I know their capacity. I know they give us an honest day's work every day and they do due

diligence. They have a responsibility to ensure the advice that's given to the respective ministers indeed reflects the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and reflects the ability for the government to be able to provide services in a financially responsible manner.

I want to again thank the Committee and thank the line departments that I had the privilege of sitting in and having debate with. I want to thank the Chair again.

I also want to go back to yesterday here in the House. I first need to clarify something, sorry. I was misquoted yesterday in *The Telegram* around the scrum I had relevant to the ABE program. I just want to clarify because I had some discussion with some of my former colleagues –

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** – in the not-for-profit sector who offer the ABE program and do a phenomenal job, including students who need to avail of that service, of ensuring that the communities are engaged in offering that, and ensuring that these students are successful and move on to a post-secondary career and then on to another role as productive citizens in our society.

*The Telegram* reporter unfortunately misquoted me. He said that the Member had said that the not-for-profits weren't doing a good job. That wasn't at all what I had said. When we reviewed the tape of the scrum, it's evident there; it's just a miscue there.

What I was referring to is that the private sector and the not-for-profit sector, if we're automatically going to jump right into changing the system we have now, then if we're saying that's what we're doing without looking at the data, looking at the information, having dialogue, then we're inferring – I say, we, being the department and the minister, we're inferring that the private sector and the not-for-profit sector are not doing a good job.

I just want to clarify that. Fortunately enough, because of my working relationship with a

number of these agencies, they personally phoned me because they were a little perturbed that they thought my knowledge and my background with that that I would say that, knowing the valued work they do.

Some of the agencies I've had the privilege to work with, like the T. I. Murphy Centre, there's nobody in this province, nobody in this country who would say anything negative about how they offer programs and services and how they engage their clientele, and how they support moving the students they have to the next level.

I just want to clarify that, to get that on the record. It was just a misquote. My full support is there for the process, that the ABE program right now is being offered in the private and not-for-profit sector. If there's something that indicates that's not the best delivery model, well then I'm open for that dialogue without a doubt, because I think we have a responsibility, every one of us, to ensure that not only do we spend our money in the right way, but we ensure that we get the best return. The best return is that we provide the best possible service for the clientele we're servicing. In this case, it would be those who, unfortunately, never completed their high school equivalency or have some other challenges around their academic needs, who could avail of a particular service.

I just wanted to clarify that, particularly if there are any of the agencies or students or instructors or general public communities that offer these programs, to know that I'm still very supportive. I had a small part in the whole process over a number of years as part of ABE program, and I look forward to it expanding. I look forward to it being more inclusive for people. I'm open for new approaches to offering the programs and services to the people in this province, particularly in remote and rural communities because they're key components to ensure that students in those areas, who have some challenges around academics, have access to those particular services.

Again, I look forward to meeting with the minister and his staff. I look forward to hearing dialogue from him when he does a full assessment. I think it's healthy to do a full assessment of any program we have in government, but I do caution, before decisions

are made, that the evidence based must be presented to the general public. There must be proper dialogue with all the stakeholders to ensure you've got every piece of information that would be relevant to making the decision that's going to move any program forward or it's going to do it in the most financially efficient way.

I do encourage the minister, and no doubt, we had a good dialogue yesterday. He committed that would be his approach, and I think it's a sound approach. I'm looking forward, if we can improve how we deliver ABE, I'm behind it, but I still want to emphasize the fact we have to ensure that people in remote and rural communities have access to it and they have access to it in an inclusive, comfortable, conducive learning model. We've had a lot of those.

If you noted some of our ABE residents, or ABE graduates particularly, some of the present students have won national and international awards for the ABE success. So that's a testament to where we are.

I might have noted in this House before, but I have a – I guess a friend now, because after seven years of this individual being in the ABE program that I was attached to, in two weeks' time will graduate from CNA in one of the particular trades. That's a testament to her commitment to wanting to further her education, but it's a commitment to the agencies who went out of their way to make sure that it was engaging, and did it at the ability she could do it as a single parent. This is a lady who's in her later years, who now gets a chance to get a second career, go back into being able to do something now that's productive for what we do in these years.

She's raised her family, very productive as a single parent, did a great job of that, was involved in community. Now has had the ability to go back, complete her full education, now go on to post-secondary and start another career. So it's a great opportunity for her, but it shows how inclusive and how the delivery model that we have for the ABE programs is working. Again, if we can improve on that, perfect, let's take it from there.

I also want to note, yesterday – I want to appreciate for all the callouts I got yesterday from the government side. The Minister of Service NL noted me, and my colleague for Fogo Island – Cape Freels acknowledged me yesterday, and the Premier last night acknowledged me. It was a great day yesterday, I've got to admit. It was a great day for the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. I do acknowledge that and I thank you, it's good.

I do want to clarify a few things as part of that, though. A lot, if not all of what the Minister of Service NL noted of the things I talked about back in 2014 were accurate; were the views about how we should perform better in government and how we have a responsibility to do that. If I say something in the House of Assembly then it's based on the information I have and it's based on the view I think would be in the best interest. Does it always work out perfectly? Of course not. We all go based on what we think is the right approach. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't.

The message here is that we need to be frugal in what we do. We need to be responsible, and I accept that. I know the government has to do that. That's why you're government, and I know you're facing some financial challenges, as are everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador. My point was, and always will be, we have to make decisions that also continue to move this province forward and continue to give people hope on what they're doing, and continue to engage the great business community we have here, and the great volunteer community, and the great municipal leaders to ensure they can give that bit of extra energy, because they know there's light at the end of the tunnel. That's what my whole theme was about, and I think we all have that responsibility.

I will continue to ask the government side to do that. When myself, and I know my colleagues here in the Opposition feel you're not doing that, we're going to call you out on it. That's how this House works. That's why it still reflects what we're debating here, the whole Estimates. That is what it's about. It gives the Opposition an opportunity in Estimates to dig down a little bit more to exactly examine what's being offered.

If you're going to spend \$20 million, what does that mean from a program point of view? Which agencies get to avail of that? Is it 90 per cent in salaries and 10 per cent in delivery? Is it all salaries because it's service oriented? Is it contracts that we have with outside entities, private sector, other agencies that can best deliver a particular service or an entity? Is it specialized professional services that we either don't have the expertise or from an economy of scale it's better that we not have full-time staff doing that but we can contract out when we need it?

That gives us an opportunity to look at how government runs. Normally there's a streamline, there's consistence over no matter what government is in and over the course of years. There are obviously peaks and valleys on how you do it. Sometimes you do more work in consultants, because from an economy of scale that works. Sometimes it's because there's only a particular expertise, there's a one-time project that you have to bring some people in. Other times you look at what you're spending in outside consultant fees and it's better to have that expertise in house. You look at, we've added some staff and we've added staffing because we can avail of those individuals on a constant basis without having to go through an encompassing process of RFPs or Expressions of Interest or contract processes.

That's what I like about the Estimates, it really gives you an opportunity to dig down to the grassroots level and find out exactly what benefits we're getting out of the money that's being spent and it gives you an opportunity as a critic to make some suggestions. It doesn't necessarily mean the government side are always going to take them and heed them as something positive that they want to do, but it does get it out there.

It gets it out there, because some of the conversations we've had, you can note by some of the senior staff that they're thinking, yeah, that makes sense; or, you can tell by their reaction, we've already been talking about that. That's still in play. So you get a good read from people's body language that things are happening.

I do say, in some cases I was pleased by the responses. In some other cases I still have some questions. In some cases the staff and the minister are going to respond and give us the information so we'll know if there's something there that we need to ask on or if there isn't. That was part and parcel of where we are.

I might note, too, the Premier last night responded about – and it's been said a few times in the House and I laugh and I chuckle because I don't want to point fingers or any of these things, because things happen in the progress of construction, in the progress of a particular contract, in the progress of developing certain things, and I'm glad my hon. Member over there had mentioned about the wharf because that's how the Premier said it last night that I ordered a boat without a wharf.

Now, the general public would say: That doesn't make sense. Why would you do that? Well, you wouldn't do it and that's why it's the same thing I didn't do it, nor did my predecessor do it. What we did do is order a boat, develop a contract and put a contractor in place.

Unfortunately, for me, I didn't get to stay as minister of Transportation and Works, so my three months while the eight-month contract was in play, it progressed. Then there was identification that there had to be a new approach on how they were doing it. Fair enough. Then there was a reassessment.

I'm no longer minister there and the minister here – I know how he works, like anybody else. He takes it and does a reassessment and says: Here's how we're going to do it now; here's our new time frames. It's all work in play. The time frames were still in play right up until the ferry would be ready to go after training and all that.

Unfortunately, you run into things in contracting. Contractors are not on site, weather conditions and that. But it's hard to finish a contract when for 4½ months there's not one person doing any work on it. The issue becomes weather. I have a problem with that, when we can't work on one particular project, but in the same district there are schools being built in the middle of the winter.

I take no blame for the completion of a wharf with a ferry ready to go. I do take blame for the fact that maybe if I had stayed there I might have been able to move it a little bit faster, but it didn't happen. So we're at a point now where we know there's an end result. I just wanted to clarify that.

There were three wharves done – well, four altogether. The last one is being finished now. Fogo Island and Change Islands, all done and completed; the ferry went in and worked. Now we're going to add something else because nothing to do with the new boats, it's to do with the previous boat about tying it up. The Member noted yesterday the dolphin will be built.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** It's another safety issue and also helps with the movement of the pressure of ice when they're particularly in that job.

Bell Island, a full-fledged contract done; we even added an added contract to it. We're bringing in what's called a mooring system. Innovative for Newfoundland and Labrador; not used anywhere; barely used in North America; some out in BC; big in Europe. It does a lot of things about being able to secure the boats; being able to, from an environmental point of view, shut your ferries off so you're not using fuel while you're in port.

They're in play. I give credit; the minister has those contracts out. They're in play. I talked to the two contractors and I'm told they will fit well within the time frames. Bell Island is gung ho. Contractors over there work weekends to get it done.

We have set a time frame for July 1 and the minister would better be aware of that. I'm hopeful – I'm not always confident but I'm hopeful – that wharf will be done because we have a beautiful boat that the people of Bell Island are waiting to come to service them.

We just now have another dispute about how many trips we're going to get to grow –

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** – an economy that is based on one of the pillars of the provincial government over there, and that's tourism. We have a beautiful site, Bell Island, right next door that has all kinds of amenities for drawing attractions for tourists; but if we're going to spend money in a ferry service, we need to have it so it's conducive for the travelling public, and that means we need to have the number of trips that work when the general public are travelling.

If it's the working public in the mornings and in the evening, if it's the public who have to go for medical appointments, it needs to be conducive of that; and if we have, even if it's a timely fashion for six months of the heavy tourism season, then we need to arrange a system and a schedule that works for them. So they are things that we need to pan out here.

It has to be a collaborative approach here because regardless of party partisans, there's an investment here. It's done. The investment is there. Whether people agree or disagree at this point is immaterial. It's in play. What becomes important now is how you get back revenues on your investment. Well, the best way to do it for places like Bell Island: Make it conducive so that the general public can get to work in St. John's and find gainful employment so they don't get fired or laid off because at the end of the day they're missing so much work because the schedule doesn't work or they're late every day.

The other is if you're going to grow one of your pillars – and one of the key pillars here by this administration is tourism. You've got a site that has total historic benefit here. It has a draw with the underground submarine mine. It has beautiful scenery. It has all the amenities to draw tourism. We've seen it's one of the key points in the Avalon Peninsula for drawing tourists.

The stumbling block has always been the ability – from a travelling point of view, people don't want to wait two hours to get to Bell Island. Now, the minute they get there, they'll love it. They love the whole process. They said they'd come and there'd be thousands more would come if the transportation link was conducive. So we need to improve that.

We've invested \$60 million to bring it up to par, so let's make it work so that we get a return on our investment. So it's all in play. Again, regardless of why, who or whatever part of the province thinks it was a bad investment, the investment is there. I personally think it was a good investment. Our government thought it was a good investment. I know the people of Bell Island feel it's a good investment and now we want to prove to the rest of the province that it's a good investment.

To do that, we need to have the system working to its potential. That means if you have a vessel that can handle 65 cars, we have to make sure that it does enough trips so that – the old cliché, build it and they'll come, when people know they can come, get on a ferry, maximize the time frames in travel, maximize the capacity then that's a benefit to everybody.

So I'll have an opportunity to talk to the minister over the next period of time on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It certainly is an honour and a privilege to stand here today to speak on the Concurrence Motion for the Resource Committee. I, first of all, want to acknowledge and thank the Chair of the Committee, Baie Verte – Green Bay MHA, who did a stellar job.

I can tell you, I spent over three hours in front of the Resource Committee reviewing the Estimates of the Natural Resources Department and I can tell you that the dedication and commitment of the MHAs to this process is to be noted and to be thanked. Because I know the Opposition, my hon. colleagues on this side of the House, as well as my colleagues on the other side of the House, certainly put in a lot of effort in reviewing all the Estimates of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and asking the questions they feel are pertinent.

I also want to thank my team at Natural Resources. I know that we brought many of them to the House – senior executive to the

House of Assembly when we had the discussion around Estimates, around Natural Resources. I made all my executives available to the Committee to ask the important questions that need to be asked on those Estimates. I thank them for their diligence and commitment and their commitment to the province, Mr. Speaker. Not just to the process, but to the province.

Civil servants work very hard on behalf of the people of this province and, oftentimes, we don't thank them enough for their efforts. So I'll take this opportunity, as I have a moment in the House of Assembly today, to say thank you to all the public servants for all that they do.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the last speaker who talked about the ABE. I thought it was interesting where he talked about how important ABE is. I agree with him, it is important, but he seemed to be talking about making sure that we have that commitment in the College of the North Atlantic. I thought it was interesting to note that in 2013, the former administration, the PC administration, removed that from the College of the North Atlantic. I thought I heard him say that he would like to see it back in –

**MR. BRAZIL:** The opposite.

**MS. COADY:** It's the opposite. Okay, thank you for that clarification. I thought he was saying he'd like to see it back in the College of the North Atlantic. He just informed me that it was opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to also talk about how important – and I think this is on behalf of everyone in this House. I know that all of us are committed to giving back to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and service to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I think we're intent in that. We have good intentions.

I know I was raised in a household that really did commit to helping in our communities, helping both voluntarily and otherwise, but making sure we give back to our communities. I

think it was Winston Churchill who once said: You make a living by what you get; you make a life by what you give. I think that it's very important that we all give to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know that this government, I'm very proud and honoured to be part of this government and I think it's working very diligently. I think over the last year we worked quite methodically and diligently to improve the finances of this province, Mr. Speaker.

I was very pleased last night to participate and to listen in on the Facebook Live where the Premier – it's the first time I think it was ever done, where the Premier sat for some 45 minutes, took questions from people all over the province, opening up and saying, bring on your questions. I thought that was a great process.

I particularly enjoyed Facebook Live. It was the first time I used Facebook Live. It was wonderful to have that opportunity, for people all around the province – indeed, anyone around the globe, but most importantly people in this province to have access, to ask the questions to the Premier. I thought he did a phenomenal job last night of being open and giving that information to the people of the province.

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, I was also very pleased last week when C.D. Howe Institute came out with their assessment on the quality of the government financial information and on government's success, or failure, on budgetary goals.

The C.D. Howe Institute took an assessment of this province and the financial affairs of this province. They've given this province a B. Mr. Speaker, that is phenomenal, where they basically said we've been very successful in meeting our targets, meeting our goals, the quality of the financial information is there. That's such an improvement over the last number of years. It was an E in 2016, a D in 2015, and we're a B this year. I think it speaks to this government.

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

**MS. COADY:** So when people say you're not being open and transparent enough, C.D. Howe Institute has said the quality of our financial information certainly is there, and we're being successful on our budgetary goals. That's what we set out as government, was to put this province on the right track to be healthy and successful, to have the money necessary to invest in our communities and to ensure an incredible quality of life. So I was very, very pleased to see that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the Department of Natural Resources. I want to give the people who are listening today and my colleagues some of the – what I'm going to call – very encouraging signs in our economy. Often we hear about how difficult things are in our province today. We're basically winding down on a number of megaprojects. There are a lot of people who are transitioning to other work and it's been very, very difficult, very, very challenging.

There is a lot of good happening in this province. I can tell you last week I was part of a 100-person delegation; 100 people from this province who attended the Offshore Technology Conference in Houston. Over 100 people from this province.

I can tell you that stacked up quite well with the rest of the world, not just in Canada but in the world, 100 people being there. There was a sense of cautious optimism. I could tell you the difference between last year when I attended this conference and this year was interesting to note how much people have adjusted to the lower-priced environment in the oil and gas industry, how people have really worked hard to ensure that we are competitive in this province and how the industry is – I won't call it rebounding but certainly reassured in terms of our prospectivity and our opportunity in this province.

The long-term view of oil and gas in this province remains very compelling. There have been, as you know, Mr. Speaker, and the people of this province know, a lot of short-term fluctuations in the oil prices. We continue to enhance our expertise, working with the best and the brightest the industry has to offer in this province and around the world, and advancing our strategic opportunities and making sure that



we are highly competitive in a global environment.

That's why we brought together the Oil and Gas Industry Development Council. I was very pleased that we were able to start the Industry Development Council. We have 10 stellar people sitting around a table talking about how do we ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador is one of the primary locations, the premiere location, for offshore oil and gas development in the world.

We're at a critical point in our province with regard to oil and gas and in this industry. It's vital that we come together to develop clear, transparent, effective policies and a vision for how we're going to continue to grow the opportunity in the oil and gas industry.

Working together, we're going to position Newfoundland and Labrador as the preferred location for offshore oil and gas development by creating good conditions that are ideal for increased exploration and development. We want to ensure that there's certainty and maintain an attractive and stable business environment for operators and investors because we know that's critical to the long-term success of the industry.

This is an industry that has all kinds of ups and downs; it's a commodity-driven, price-driven environment. But what we're doing really is positioning ourselves and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to persistently withstand those ups and those downs. We want to have a globally, competitive industry here in this province. We are developing that and working towards, as I said, ensuring that we are well positioned for not just the opportunities in the oil and gas industry here, but around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I always find it a great opportunity to explain to the people of the province just what kind of opportunity we have in our offshore. We are considered one of the top frontier regions in the world today, with over 20 basins, significant new basin areas, and over 350 leads and prospects to date from the seismic work that we're doing offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

We've been decades exploring for offshore oil and gas in Newfoundland and Labrador. We've certainly gained the knowledge and understanding of the industry, and we have had great success. We have three producing projects in Hibernia, Terra Nova and White Rose. Combined, they've produced 1.6 billion barrels of oil.

In fact, late last year, I think it was in December, Hibernia Management and Development Company and ExxonMobil Canada announced that the Hibernia Gravity Base Structure has produced its one billionth barrel of oil. One billion barrels of oil from Hibernia – and, Mr. Speaker, Hibernia's not done yet. Right now we know there's an opportunity for 700,000 more barrels of oil, and I keep being very – again, I'll use the term, cautiously optimistic, that'll go to a billion. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the very first barrel of oil flowed from Hibernia nearly 20 years ago in November of 1997 and it still goes strong today.

Next up, Mr. Speaker, is Hebron. This week I'm sure you've been hearing a lot about the Hebron tow out. We're hoping that it's slated for tow out to the Jeanne d'Arc Basin this month as soon as the weather clears and we're able to get the platform. Its production is slated for later this year. Hebron represents another important oil project for Newfoundland and Labrador. It has recoverable reserves estimated at over 700 million barrels, and near-field opportunities of 288 million barrels. It will be another billion barrel platform.

One big thing I want to bring to the province's attention, to the people of the province's attention, 40 million person-hours completed without a lost-time work incident at Hebron. Forty million person-hours completed. That is incredible. What a global standard we have set in this province, Mr. Speaker. It demonstrates the capability and expertise of the province's workforce and validates the world-class capacity in this province.

I know in speaking with ExxonMobil Canada that they have taken note, very well, of what has been done to ensure the safety of workers in this province and are taking some of the lessons learned and taking it around the world.

I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to go out to the Hebron platform; I actually christened the Hebron platform – what an opportunity and a proud moment in my life. But it is truly an engineering marvel that has been made right here in this province.

Mr. Speaker, in the interest of time, I'm going to move on to mining. It's certainly one of our oldest and leading industries and a major contributor to our economy. There are about 7,000 people employed. Mineral shipments are forecast to be \$2.9 billion in 2017.

We have a diversified mineral industry that provides commodities to a global world market. I just want to talk about some of the mining initiatives. I've spoken in the House before that IOC announced, in February, they are going to proceed with a \$79 million investment to develop Wabush 3 project that will extend the life of the current mine, reduce operating costs and increase the production of quality-grade iron ore.

The construction is planned to begin this spring –

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

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

**MS. COADY:** – with the first ore to occur in the second half of 2018.

Tata Steel, high-grade iron project in Labrador's northern Menihek region, represents a billion-dollar investment in the area and has operated since 2013. They're continuing to develop, Mr. Speaker, and looking to develop the Howse deposit will improve and strengthen the existing operation.

We know that the construction of the Long Harbour processing plant was completed in late 2016. We know that there's a two-year ramp up schedule to reach full capacity at the hydromet plant. The plant employs over 500 operational staff.

The Voisey's Bay Mine Expansion Project which will include both Reid Brook and Eastern Deeps deposits that are adjacent to the current open-pit mine, the Ovoid, is under construction.

It started expansion last year and will facilitate the transition from an open pit to underground mining, which is set to begin in 2020. Once in operation, the underground mining will extend the life of the Voisey's Bay operation until 2032.

Canada Fluorspar –

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

**MS. COADY:** – initiated construction of a surface and underground fluorspar mine in St. Lawrence on the Burin Peninsula in 2016. Construction is expected to be carried out over two years, with operations scheduled to begin in late 2017. I can tell you, the two MHAs that are responsible for that area have worked diligently to ensure its success, to ensure its operation.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, at peak employment, there are going to be approximately 350 to 400 workers? It's going to produce up to 200,000 tons of acid-grade fluorspar concentrate. It's amazing, Mr. Speaker, the amount of effort that is being put into our mining industry. CFI expects to employ approximately 200 full-time positions over its 10-year plan – wonderful.

In September of last year, Anaconda Mining completed its mill automation project at the Pine Cove mill. The \$1 million upgrade was funded by government programs from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, as well as from this government. By improving existing infrastructure and using new innovative technologies, the mill automation project will reduce operating costs, increase productivity and focus on more value-added activities.

Mr. Speaker, I can keep on going. Rambler Metals & Mining, another one from the Baie Verte District, has been investigating the use of Dense Media Separation onsite at Nugget Pond. Again, the MHA for the region of Baie Verte – Green Bay has worked diligently in making sure all was done that was possible for Rambler Metals.

Alderon has released results of the updated preliminary economic assessment on their Rose deposit in the Kami iron ore property in western Labrador. The company has indicated this marks the beginning of a project reboot, based on

updated economic assumption. The MHA from the area has certainly worked hard –

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

**MS. COADY:** – the MHA for Lab West, to ensure success for the industry there.

Should the project proceed, it will create numerous jobs during the construction period and the 24-year mine life. These are just a few of the exciting projects in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, this government is working very diligently to diversify the economy, so it's not just on natural resources but on diversifying the economy, building on our opportunity, creating new opportunities in new sectors.

Yesterday, Premier Ball announced a new Cabinet Committee on Jobs that will help create unprecedented partnerships with industry to drive jobs and growth in Newfoundland and Labrador. This is in keeping with government's commitment to foster an environment in which business can excel and government can pursue new actions in collaboration with industry. These actions represent and address the opportunities and challenges specific to those sectors that we're looking at and achieve set economic goals.

The first two industries government will partner with were there at the table yesterday encouraging this. That was aquaculture and agriculture, with other industries to follow. But what you're seeing is a collaborative effort with business organizations to grow the economy.

Achieving the targets outlined in *The Way Forward* vision will support approximately 14,000 person-years of employment annually in the province. And let me underscore, that's 14,000 person-years of employment annually – a significant goal and one which we will achieve. This is a phenomenal effort undertaken by our government and I'm pleased to join the Premier and six other Cabinet colleagues in this vital project.

Mr. Speaker, you've heard other people speak in this House about the commitment to a multi-year plan for infrastructure investments that commits

nearly \$3 billion over five years in new and existing schools, hospitals, highways and municipal infrastructure. This plan alone will result in the equivalent of 4,900 full-time jobs on an annual basis over the course of each of those five years. Our government is showing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in meaningful ways that we take jobs and job creation very seriously.

While I'm on the topic of infrastructure and roadwork, I must take a moment to mention something of significance to the people of my district in St. John's West. In this year's budget we committed, the government, \$21.2 million to advance the construction of Team Gushue Highway extension. A tender valued at over \$15 million has been awarded to Municipal Construction for the completion of the next phase of the Team Gushue Highway.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it shows commitment to the good work on behalf of the people in this province of this government, and I'm very pleased to speak to the Estimates and the budget today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The motion is that the report of the Resource Committee be concurred in.

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.

On motion, Report of Resource Estimates Committee, carried.

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, the budget debate.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Seeing no further speakers, are we ready for the vote?

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

It's a pleasure to get up and speak on the main motion of the budget. After speaking several times now I've had the opportunity to get up and speak on the budget, so it's always another good opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that's been brought up in the House many times is the government's new initiative of making more lands available for agricultural use. Being from the District of Conception Bay South, which is historically a farming district, it was built on agriculture. It's not like a lot of our communities within the province that the fishery was the backbone of the community; agriculture was the backbone of Conception Bay South.

To this day, there are still a lot of farmers out in my district. Not as many as in years gone by but it's still a very active industry. A lot of the issues I see now with the farming industry in my own district is that it's an aging population that's out doing the farming.

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

**MR. PETTEN:** Mr. Speaker, I'm having trouble concentrating.

It's an aging population, farmers in my area. It's almost like it's becoming a lost trade. Any time the government can create any new initiatives to spur on agricultural growth and attract new farmers to the industry is always a good thing. I want to commend government for making that possible.

There's still a lot more work that needs to be done, especially when you look at the Northeast Avalon. There's a lot of rapid development over a number of years, a lot of our agricultural lands are getting developed. Our Crown lands are somewhat not as accessible as it once was. It's a

lot of demand on any available land due to the rapid development on the Northeast Avalon.

Any time we can make more lands available to spur the growth of this industry is a good thing. It's something that – since being elected we all try to land on a certain thing that is not front and center in people's minds but it's something that I think when you speak about it, it resonates – in my area is agriculture. I talked to a lot of people that are in the industry or were in the industry.

As a matter of fact, as a child, my father was a farmer. We actually farmed for many years, so I was very familiar with it. I lived in an area where I was surrounded by – that's where I grew up to. To this day, where I live now, I live on the beginning, basically, of an agricultural road.

It's something that I think is a good move. We can do a lot more. There's still a lot of agricultural land that's held that's not being farmed. I spoke to the minister on that as well, because it's a shame sometimes with these lands that are being held under agriculture leases and there's not a lot of activity on them. Farm plans are in place but there's little activity and over five, 10 years before you go back and review it. All the while you have these new farmers, these young farmers that want to get in the industry and are having great difficulty in doing that because of lack of land available.

On that note, I really do think it's a good thing. One other note while I speak on agriculture. I had spoken to the minister some time ago about agriculture in the classrooms. I had an opportunity during Literacy Week to visit a local elementary school. When I went in there I was struck by the Agriculture in the Classroom program. The class I read to the children in, they had it set up. It caught my attention just by my background of being involved with – growing up around farming all my life. I thought it was a very neat concept.

I asked a few questions and a short time later a local farm operation in CBS contacted me. They wanted to try to do a – it's turned into a pilot but to bring it to the high school level. We're doing it in elementary, then there's no more promotion of it until whenever, there's no more through the schools. Doing the pilot project at a high school level to get them as they're ready to go out into

the workforce may pique people's interest at that level and they can carry on. Not everyone is going to go to any colleges or universities, a lot of people – everyone has their own interest.

After speaking with the minister on this issue, he committed to look in to it. During this year's Speech from the Throne, actually, part of the Speech from the Throne on agriculture was to do a couple of pilots in high schools. One of those pilots was in the high school that I had referenced in my district. So I also want to commend the minister on seeing that through. That's another good initiative, once again, to bring new people into the industry.

Those initiatives I think are good. It's not all bad on this side, Madam Speaker; we do see some good things. I do like to commend on both sides. I like to compliment when good decisions are made.

Madam Speaker, I want to go to a topic that I know me and my colleague from Ferryland have thought about and we spoke about many times, is Mistaken Point. We're into May; we're pushing the middle of May. There's some movement being made on Mistaken Point. I guess it's still something we're keeping a close watch on.

As recently as a couple of days back, I met with officials on various issues. That is something that I asked questions about as well because Mistaken Point is a UNESCO site. It's a World Heritage Site. It's the first World Heritage Site that's going to be provincially managed. The rest are managed by Parks Canada. This will be one that we're managing ourselves. It's a huge compliment. We should all have a sense of pride to be recognized. We have four in the province. I know, Madam Speaker, you have one in your own district. I have visited that in Red Bay and it's quite beautiful.

To have this opportunity and not be ready for the visitors, not being ready for – because I've said many times, the world is coming and we're not ready because people plan their vacations. People plan their trips around these sites. They look them up; they locate them and plan their trips around visiting World Heritage Sites. It's what they do.

At Mistaken Point, some of the oldest fossils in the world exist there. There's a unique interest into that stuff. It may not be for everyone. I've visited the site and it is a beautiful area. A lot of people will be planning their trips to come to Mistaken Point, and if we don't have the infrastructure, the staffing, if we don't have all of the conditions that are required under UNESCO, I think it would be an embarrassment to the province to not be ready. I know there's work being done right now.

The only unfortunate thing is the former administration – and my colleague from Ferryland, it's in his own district and he's a big advocate and champion for it as well. There were a lot of things moved for it to get the designation. We were designated last July of 2016.

In May of 2017, there are a lot of things done that we felt should have been done prior to now. So we're kind of behind the ball to get this stuff rolling. I am glad there seems to be some attention being paid. The minister is aware of the issue, but I want to reiterate and keep it alive because this could turn out to be a wonderful thing; it could turn out to be not so wonderful if we don't meet the proper requirements.

There's a local aspect to it. On the local aspect, Madam Speaker, the local community – as you're quite familiar with Red Bay in your own district – the locals of very proud of that site to be in your own area. There is a lot of local knowledge. Parks Canada, I know from visiting these other sites around the province – the local community are a very part of this UNESCO site. They take great pride. It's an ownership. It's a passion. People out there have been involved with the Mistaken Point application and process for many, many years, and to this day, there is hardly a day goes by that they're not reaching out to someone about it. It's their passion.

In meeting the requirements under UNESCO, something that we should keep in mind too is to keep the locals engaged and to listen to their concerns. I do believe that their voices are starting to get heard and listened to within the department. Again, I thank the department for that, but I'm concerned that it's gone on a long time with no action. I guess it's no small part to a lot of lobbying and attention that we've

brought to the issue here in the House of Assembly and in the public domain, that we're getting some headway with it.

I guess it's somewhat of a caution that I just don't want to see something like this, such a good thing, could turn into such a bad thing in the sense that we wouldn't be ready. I do encourage government to keep pushing for it and the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources to make this a priority.

As we know, what happened with the dismantling of the Department of Environment, natural areas was shifted over to Fisheries and Land. There were new ministers. People had to catch up. There was a lot of realignment within government and that didn't help the matter either. So I do encourage government to keep pushing to make this – because this can be something that we can all be very proud of.

We have four in the province. It's not an easy designation to attain and when you attain it, there are certain conditions that you have. This is not for ever and a day that you have this designation. You have to do your piece of work to keep that designation or you could be deregistered. I'm sure anyone in this House who is familiar with UNESCO understands that concept as well.

Madam Speaker, there is another issue. I guess it's to do with my critic role. It's pertinent to what we see out on our roadways today: the state of our roads. This year, in particular, has been a challenging year, to say the best. I have never seen so many potholes. Potholes are the main thing. I guess you have some shoulder issues too, but it's a topic of the day everywhere you go, the condition of our roads.

I do believe that it's something that we all talk about, but I think that it's something else – and I have talked to the Department of Transportation and Works about this. We have to find better ways. Right now we spend millions of dollars on cold patch yearly. I don't know if anyone else have noticed but most of the cold patch I see ends up on the shoulder of the road, or in a parking lot, or in the middle of the road, and it's not working.

One innovative way – I noticed the Town of Paradise actually put sandbags down in some potholes through the winter season when you could not get them repaired, because there is a cold time in our winter that it's virtually impossible without a hot patch.

I do believe, and I've talked to many about this as well – everyone acknowledges that our climate is freezing cold, water is getting under it, it's creating these potholes which are an annoyance for everyone. There wasn't a day that went by this past winter when you didn't hear someone complaining about a blowout. It was happening to everyone. People are not too pleased in a cold night and you're going out and you're on the side of the TCH with your rim and your tire busted.

I do encourage – and again, I have spoken to officials within the Department of Transportation and Works who've assured me that they are looking into this as well. I think attention needs to be kept to the issue. I think as government, whether it comes from our contractors or even private people that know better ways, we need to be more creative in what we're doing to fix our roads.

You can do the same thing over and over again and expect a different result. I think that's what's starting to happen. For years, we do the cold patch during the winter. We repair the roads as best we can during the summertime when your asphalt plants are available. Then you go back; it's one vicious cycle. I do believe there has to be a better way to this.

There's one thing too, asphalt recyclers – and I know we have some within the Department of Transportation and Works. There has to be a way to get that asphalt that they can produce to whatever area of the road that needs to be fixed. That seems pretty routine; I've talked to officials about this. They have no way to transport it to the actual area that they need to bring it, to keep the asphalt heated.

So I bring up those things, because I do believe that it's worthy of some conversation. This is not a new thing. Year after year after year, we talk about the same thing. People will say they go to other places and they don't notice the same problems with the roads. So again, I know

there's some testing being done in certain areas on the Trans-Canada, different asphalt mixes. I do believe that we need to be more creative, innovative in our thinking, probably think outside the box to try to come to better solutions. Whether that be a better quality cold patch, find a way to get the hot asphalt during the winter months to fix these holes, it will create a lot less anxiety on the motoring public and it would alleviate a lot of outrage, because we hear it every day. A lot of it I can't say I blame them.

Madam Speaker, again, I'll go back to another part of my role and it's something that I think I should bring it up whenever I get the opportunity, because being the critic a lot of people have reached out to me. It's about the Crown Lands move to Corner Brook. I've talked about this many times and many angles, but I guess what I want to emphasize today is people that are being impacted by this are still reaching out to us. They reach out to Members opposite because I get the emails; they're copied on them – some Members opposite are. They're expressing some valid concerns. They still don't know. We are in May; this move was supposed to happen July 1. They do not know if they're going, how many of them are going. Ironically, the department does not know that either. As recently as the other day we're being told there are 30 positions – that may not be people; 30 positions are being affected.

So here we are now – and I brought this up before and I think it's worth mentioning again. Those people are still in limbo. They're still sitting home wondering, should I sell my house, should I try to relocate, get another home out in Corner Brook, will my wife or my husband have to try to change jobs, the family model with your children, you name it – it's a lot of stress on those people.

So where we are now pushing the middle of May and they have still not been told. That's, I guess, disingenuous would be one word, but there needs to be more respect paid to those people. As recently as two days ago, I know my colleague, our leader, for Topsail – Paradise, he was also copied on this email. And it came from someone anonymous. There's a real person behind that, but they're not going to show their name, tell their name because they don't want to put the bull's eye on themselves. They have a lot

of concerns and they express those concerns. The Premier is part of that email trail and the minister, but they express their concerns.

When I read that, regardless if you're on this side, that side, whatever side you're on, if you read that and it don't hit a certain part of your psyche there's something missing there, because they're crying out for answers. They have concerns. I really and truly – and I'm not saying the minister is a horrible person or anyone is, but I truly wish people would look and listen to their concerns. At the end of the day, the decision may not change. Sometimes it's not about the decision, it's about how you deal with the decision, how you react to people's concerns about the decision.

It's like the saying goes, it's not what you say, it's how you say it. The same thing applies here. If they're going to do the move they're going to do the move, fair enough. Be respectful to the people that are going to be impacted. Talk to them, explain your rationale, explain the options. Alleviate some of their concerns because these people are really crying out for answers, and, Madam Speaker, they're not getting those answers.

I'll bring it up here in the House today, and I've mentioned it to the minister many times. I think it's important to keep it to the forefront because these people are looking for someone to speak up for them and to advocate on their behalf.

So I implore government to talk to those people, to address their concerns and just listen to what they have to say because they are concerned. Again, it is valid concerns and I hope that government takes their concerns seriously and give them the respect they deserve.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster):** The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's always a great privilege to stand up here, of course, to represent your district – I represent the strong District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave – and to speak to the main motion, and to speak to all legislation that we pass through our Newfoundland and Labrador Legislature here.

Just to pick up now, of course, to speak to budget and to speak to spending, and just to respond to my hon. colleague across the floor. Just some over lining, some facts here, too, to mention, Madam Speaker, that are important. From 2003 to 2015, our province experienced revenue growth that was unprecedented in its history. However, this period of revenue growth also saw an excessive increase in government spending.

What's important to note in examining PC spending, is its correlation with the accruing deficit, Madam Speaker. Although the PC government – as we know, we hear it every day in Question Period, we hear it in debates – likes to remain ignorant to the part it played in creating its unstable financial situation the province is currently facing. What is important to remember is today's spending and deficits are tomorrow's taxes.

The PC government was also aware of this reality, yet chose to recklessly spend and jeopardize the fiscal future of our province. We know this, Madam Speaker, because we're experiencing this every day. As MHAs, we're hearing this first-hand from our constituents who come to our constituency office and tell us about the struggles they're facing each and every day.

The Auditor General, Madam Speaker, multiple think tanks and business organizations have raised the alarm bells about government spending on multiple occasions, prior to this administration taking office. Over the past decade, the previous government spent at a rate that was 20 to 36 per cent per capita higher than other provinces. You just compare that to populations, we'll say it was our Atlantic provinces. Arguably, we are the smallest with the exception to Prince Edward Island.

By planning six deficits in the past 12 years while unpredictable oil royalties grew, the former administration created a culture of spending and the absence of good fiscal

planning. These are the facts. It's just hard to sit here and to listen to the debate that goes back and forth in this House of Assembly every day when we have certain Members and parties, Oppositions and Third Parties not taking responsibility for the part they played.

Let's not plead ignorance to what's happening in our province, what's been happening in the past decade. Let's all work together. That's what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador elected each and every one of us to do. All MHAs here in this House were all elected here by our constituents and we have the honour and the obligation to be forthcoming, to take responsibility, to be honest and to work together. Why can't we all just get along, as that famous song says?

Now, Madam Speaker, I also want to reflect upon some important things in my district. I want to pay tribute and recognition to the veterans for the world wars. The Battle of the Atlantic, of course, was recognized this past week across our province. I spent this ceremonial in Bay Roberts, a very strong municipality in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

It was lovely. I mean there was a lovely parade and there were crowds, Madam Speaker, that came out to pay tribute and to see. The Legion members from across the region, from other Legion branches such as Carbonear, Bay Roberts, Brigus, as far away as Dildo came to Bay Roberts to see those young cadets who are dedicated to preserving our culture, our history.

Let's not forget, we are here in this Legislature, Madam Speaker. We're here practising our democracy. We're here planning for our health care and enjoying our rights and our freedoms. It all happened because of what those people did across seas in those world wars. I asked, actually, when I brought greetings for the ceremony – I asked: Put yourself there, think about what they experienced over in Beaumont-Hamel and at the Battle of the Atlantic; what their families experienced home here while they were waiting and hoping for their loved ones to return.

In everything we do, whether it's to go to the grocery store, to go to the bank, to go and avail



of our health care here in this province, even our young children, our education systems, let's remember why we're doing it and how it was made possible. Again, I would like to pay great recognition and great thanks to our volunteers, our Legion members, our young cadets, of course.

I also want to elaborate; my hon. colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, also talked about over the next five years Building Forward allocates nearly \$3 billion for new and existing schools, health care facilities, roads, bridges, municipal infrastructure and much more.

Of course, the passionate topic that I often speak about every time I rise in this hon. House is the topic of the replacement of the long overdue Coley's Point Primary school, located in the Town of Bay Roberts. Well, I'm happy to say, Madam Speaker, there is finally a plan. There's a four-year commitment on paper in this very program for the final replacement of Coley's Point Primary.

Again, just to remind everybody, our viewers at home, my constituents, my hon. colleagues, I'm working with the ministers relentlessly on this. Of course, this is an over 65-year-old structure, Coley's Point Primary school. There's no asphalt on the parking lot. Staff have often come to me with concern, and parents. There's a lot of confusion with the busing and the traffic while parents are dropping off their children to school. These are our youngest children, our most vulnerable children in our educational system. This is a K to three; the young kindergarteners now experiencing full-day kindergarten there at Coley's Point Primary to Grade three. That's a major concern.

There's also a big staircase. If you were to visit the building, and those familiar with the structure – and I invite all of my hon. colleagues to come sometime and visit Coley's Point Primary. If you're in the area drop by, swing by and see for yourself, there's a staircase. It's deplorable at this point. It's a concrete staircase for foot traffic of parents bringing their children to school. Again, there's no asphalt. The building is overcrowded.

There's no cafeteria, Madam Speaker. Can you imagine? These children are in their working

spaces on a daily basis and when the recess bell rings or when it's lunchtime, they have to eat their lunch on those desks.

I remember when I was in school coming up through the system. I attended St. Columba School in Harbour Grace, Holy Redeemer School in Spaniard's Bay. Of course, later on then to Ascension Collegiate in Bay Roberts when I reached my high school years, but when you're that young you need to get out around. You need to stretch your legs. You need to get out. The mandated playground area outside has also been reduced now due to the portables that have to be brought onsite.

I know the ministers here on this side of the House – I often talk with and work with the Minister of Education. The Minister of Transportation and Works, I've been visiting his department quite frequently – the Premier. They all know, and I'm happy to say, you know what? They're working with me to make this happen. It's for those young constituents out in Coley's Point Primary. It's for those parents; it's for the staff that spend endless hours on a full-time basis in that building.

I'm happy to say the land prior to the election was expropriated. This is something that people in this area have been lobbying for, for years – years and years and years. I can't stand here and tell you why it's been overlooked. We can surmise, we can predict, we can guess. But I'm telling you as the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grace District, as their MHA this is an issue that I will not let die – absolutely not, Madam Speaker.

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

**MS. P. PARSONS:** I will talk about this issue until ground breaks. I'm happy to say that this year there is a commitment. There is a \$750,000 commitment in this fiscal year. The details are still being worked out as to exactly what that money will be spent on. One would think it would be to pay for the purchase of land, because as we know, that hasn't been done at this point.

The land has been expropriated. There are a couple of sketches as of what the school could look like and there was a sign erected but to

date, that's about it. That's ultimately about what's been done on that. There were promises made over the years.

Coley's Point Primary school has a voice in this Legislature now, Madam Speaker. I talk with my colleagues regularly here and they support this initiative as well. So, again, it serves the student population of just under 400. The communities that are represented for Coley's Point Primary are the children from Port de Grave, Hibbs Cove, Bareneed, Country Road, Coley's Point, Shearstown and Butlerville. Some children come from Clarke's Beach as well to attend.

It's a main hub and it happens to be located in the busiest town, municipality in the region. Bay Roberts is arguably the hub of the Conception Bay North Region. Like you say, it's certainly a busy area with an expanding population. So I look forward to that.

Also, the Minister of Education has informed me there's an additional \$200,000 this year to accompany that \$750,000 for Coley's Point. So that's just under a million to get that ball rolling. I'm excited to see steel in the ground, to see the ground break. When that day comes, let's all be part of it because it's for the benefit of those children who go and who are attending school, it's for the staff.

It's something, like I say, Madam Speaker, I'm passionate about; I'm going to be speaking about. I certainly appreciate the support on all sides of the House for Coley's Point Primary because everybody agrees, I'm sure, that there's talk about schools and priorities and other districts.

The Member for Ferryland talks about the issue in his district. I can concur with that. I can agree because this is a very, very important priority, our children. Investment in our young people is an investment in the future of Newfoundland and Labrador, Madam Speaker.

Also, it is Municipal Awareness Week; that's been talked about here by my hon. colleagues. I'm happy to say the Minister of Municipal Affairs is a pleasure to work with, he really is. He's what I would call one of our veteran MHAs, our veteran ministers. He's there to help

out, to give advice – the parliamentary secretary the same thing.

We work together on this side of the House. It's about teamwork, because you can't – there's no I in team. You can't make a difference on your own, per se. It's working with a team, hope and hard work. That travels all the way down from Ottawa, Madam Speaker, from our great prime minister, our MPs that represent us very well for Newfoundland and Labrador, to right here in our very own House of Assembly in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm happy to say that just over \$1 million has been granted to the municipality of Bay Roberts for waste water and water infrastructure upgrades. So that's wonderful. It is hard fiscal times, but I will say, Madam Speaker, this government is getting things done, and it's important to note.

Also, at this time, too, we want to reflect upon our municipalities, and within our municipalities we know there are a lot of volunteers that come forward. These aren't necessarily paid positions for town councillors that put their names forward.

We know our volunteer firefighters, for example – and I have many strong, courageous, volunteer firefighters throughout the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, also the neighbouring District of Harbour Main, and Carbonear – Trinity – Bay de Verde. In CBN we're one big team. When one falls on hard times we all come together in Conception Bay North, Madam Speaker.

I want to take this time in particular to talk about the volunteer firefighters in Upper Island Cove. To know the people of Upper Island Cove is to certainly love them, because they are unique. I can safely say they stand out in their cohesiveness. They certainly stick together as a community. Their volunteer firefighters are second to none.

As I say, they all do a great job, but in particular I want to talk about this particular group. A lot of them are trained in health benefits, first aid, CPR, as are many volunteer firefighters, but these guys respond to a lot of health calls an ambulance would normally respond to, but given

their geography – and the Member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition would know Upper Island Cove all too well as his in-laws come from there. I understand he spends some time out there. I've seen him at festivals myself, and it's great to see our colleagues out and about.

As you can appreciate, the unique geography in Upper Island Cove – Upper Island Cove tends to Bryant's Cove and Bishop's Cove, and given the geography, they often are there – they're there within minutes after a call comes in; much faster than the ambulance given to the geography.

Something they've been lobbying for and advocating for for quite some time, for years and years – prior to the election when I was out there, of course, when I was seeking the nomination and then when I became the official candidate, a big concern for them was a fire truck. It's not simply a pumper or a regular run-of-the-mill fire truck for putting out fires. This is a medical unit. This is a unique medical unit. It's been a big priority for them for quite some time. I've met with them multiple times on it.

I've also had a meeting with the fire chief, Mr. Harvey Mercer, and a town councillor, Darren Mercer, who's also a volunteer firefighter with our provincial Fire Commissioner, Mr. Derek Simmons, to again stress the urgency for this. The minister is quite aware, I'm sure his parliamentary secretary is also quite aware that this is a huge priority for the Town of Upper Island Cove, Bishop's Cove and Bryant's Cove. It is something that I'll be advocating for and I'll be very vocal about, but I'm confident, Madam Speaker, working with the team here, and my experiences have been good. Given our time and our challenges and whatnot, we are getting things done.

Again, I want to thank the relentless volunteer hours that all of our volunteers throughout all the municipalities put in and contribute to what the towns are really all about and what they become.

Speaking of towns, I'm going to move on now to the Town of Harbour Grace. Anybody who's taken a drive through Harbour Grace, beautiful historic Harbour Grace, you can see the *Kyle*, there's an airplane out there. A common joke that we talk about for Harbour Grace is there's a

boat that doesn't float and an airplane that doesn't fly.

I want to mention as well, famous Amelia Earhart landed on the airstrip in Harbour Grace out there, but coming through Harbour Grace –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Yes, there are also songs. There are books written. I recognized a constituent, Mr. Pat Collins, here just yesterday in our Legislature for his outstanding work. As I mentioned, a lot of the books that he's put forward involve historic facts about Harbour Grace and whatnot: *The Spirit of the S.S. Kyle*, look no further.

It's important; we're relying on tourism, Madam Speaker. Tourism was one of our leading industries, and we have a lot to be proud of.

I was actually a tour guide while I was in university in Halifax, at Mount Saint Vincent University, on the Harbour Hopper. If you've taken a tour on the Harbour Hopper in historic Halifax, it was my job then to talk about the historic facts of Halifax and Nova Scotia. At the end of every tour, I would always say: Now, ladies and gentlemen, if you want to experience a real East Coast experience, visit Newfoundland and Labrador.

No matter where I went, I always promoted my great province. I was happy to return after I completed my post-secondary education to bring my skills and education back here because we're all Newfoundlanders here in this House, and Newfoundlanders who are abroad, there's always that gravitational pull that you feel to get back home.

I'm dedicated, of course, to doing everything I can for the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave and our great province as a whole. Having said that, I look forward to when we see the Trans-Labrador Highway paved, Madam Speaker.

Again, back to tourism; it's important now because Harvey Street, a main thoroughfare through the Town of Harbour Grace leading into Carbonear, leading up to Riverhead, up to Tilton, through Spaniard's Bay, it is the

Conception Bay Highway and it's a major priority as well for residents in that town.

If you were to take a drive right now through Harvey Street – as I mentioned in the House prior, I could compare it to game of Mario Kart because you are literally avoiding pothole and road destruction and whatnot. It is something that has been long a priority for these guys.

We had a meeting in here just recently with the Minister of Transportation and Works and I'm confident that there will be a plan underway. Roads: Look no further, you turn on the radio every morning and roads are a major priority, a number one priority across our province, but Harvey Street is certainly no exception nor is Cranes Road, which is another main thoroughfare through the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave going from Spaniard's Bay into Upper Island Cove. Those are certainly two big hotspots that I will certainly keep vocal on. I'm confident by working with the ministers and whatnot we're going to get things done.

Again, Madam Speaker, I look forward to Coley's Point Primary; it is near and dear to my heart. I'm happy to say the \$750,000 this year accompanied with the \$200,000, that's just under a million this year that I know – I'm actually planning a meeting now with the department again. Let's get down to the details. Let's hold our feet to the fire because as we know in histories of all legislatures around our country, many times there's money earmarked for projects and events, but the important thing is that we see it through.

We know money was announced previously, by the previous administration for Coley's Point Primary, but unfortunately nothing materialized with regard to physical work to the project. Madam Speaker, I am dedicated; it is a number one priority. The constituents in the district know this, of course, and it is something that I will talk about. I know you guys are going to be just as happy as I am and the people out in Harbour Grace – Port de Grave that we no longer have to speak about the beginning and the moving forward on Coley's Point Primary school.

Also, back to the tourism aspect, we have our annual festival coming up; we're calling it the

Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival which is an annual festival in the Town of Bay Roberts. It kicks off on May 24. I am happy to say last year I had the minister attend with me; we had a grand time. There was \$15,000 committed by our government to this project to promote it, to enhance it, to improve it. I'm happy to say the minister has informed me that again there will be another commitment of \$15,000 this year for the Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival in Bay Roberts.

It features the province's finest chefs and our seafood cuisine. There's live entertainment. There are lots of historic trails to tour while you're out there. I invite everybody to come and take the Madrock tour and visit the Madrock Cafe for the best touts. They have been voted the best touts in the province, Madam Speaker. You know what they say you can have a touton or you can do without 'em. I don't think there are many people that pass the Madrock Café and not indulge in the touts out there.

The Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival is happening May 24-28. The Small Plates reception is a Friday reception. It's a more intimate reception held at the Legion. It's a course of seafood cuisine that comes out. There's live entertainment. Then they have the barbecue happening on the following day at the Bay Arena. Again, the Bay Arena is another great hub in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. I'm happy to say that there's \$25,000 that they will be awarded for upgrades through their own efforts, through the efforts of the people in that community and how they pulled together. Of course, that was for a recent hockey competition.

Again, Madam Speaker, I look forward to the advancement on Coley's Point Primary, I'll be speaking on it again, and I'll take my place right now. It's always a great privilege to represent the people of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

Thank you.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

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

I'm glad to be able to stand and speak now for the third time on the main motion of *Budget 2017*. There is a lot I could say about the budget, I've said a lot, and there's much more I could say; but I do want, once again, to take some time to reference a story which is in the news on CBC again. This story says – I'm going to read some of this for the record, because to me it's very important: Former Muskrat Falls engineer calls for forensic audit to examine absurdly low cost estimates.

It says, "A senior engineer who worked on Muskrat Falls says Nalcor Energy should be subjected to a thorough forensic audit to find out how the Crown corporation arrived at the 'ridiculously low' initial cost projection for the hydro megaproject.

"The unit prices used to generate the estimate were far too low and did not represent the reality of harsh construction environment of central Labrador,' the engineer said.

"The risks were vastly understated and the contingencies absurdly low.'

"The engineer – whose identity CBC News has agreed to protect, because he is not authorized to speak publicly about his work on the project – believes that 'the purpose of this estimate was not to generate an estimate for project implementation, but secure project sanction.'"

It goes on and then Mr. Marshall, of course, is quoted here. Mr. Marshall is basically saying that he's open to a forensic audit. He's saying it wasn't done on my watch, it happened, and if somebody wants to come in and look at how we arrived at these ridiculously low numbers, go ahead, is what Mr. Marshall says, basically.

As we go further down, Madam Speaker, we go back to the engineer. It says: "The former senior engineer on the project says a forensic audit would answer some questions about how this could happen.

"It will accomplish first, where did the \$6.2-billion [estimate] come from? That is the key,' he said.

"It will challenge the very premise upon which the project has been approved.'

"He said he is coming forward now – albeit anonymously – because the situation got to his conscience." That's what he said; it got to his conscience.

"It is terrible,' he said. 'Because I have no other way of putting it, other than it just destroys your soul, it does. I have never seen anything like this.'"

This is not the first time I have raised this issue in the House of Assembly, Madam Speaker. I'm assuming this is the same engineer – I'm assuming, I don't know because he's anonymous, but I'm guessing it's the same one that was referenced in an Uncle Gnarly blog a while ago which I referenced in the House basically saying the same thing.

For months now – and, again, I will say as I had said before, I stood up at one point in time and I voted to sanction this project. I did so in good faith – as I know all my other colleagues at the time did, I'm sure they did – based on certain pieces of information.

Now, we've seen that this has gone way beyond what was ever put out there to the public, whatever was put out there to the House of Assembly, to all of its Members. Now, since then we've seen a number of revelations. We've seen this revelation from this engineer. I would love to be able to sit down with this individual, whoever he is, and verify it. That's the only thing that kind of concerns me is that the anonymity is there. I understand why perhaps there would be but it would be great if this person, whoever it is, would come out, identify themselves and that we could – I'd love to talk to the person. We'll see what happens.

But you have that happen; you had DarkNL. We know coming from the Liberty report we found out that the reason why DarkNL occurred was because they weren't doing basic maintenance at Holyrood. Instead of handing out pink slips, there was really no explanation other than we're handing out big old bonuses because that's what we saw. Not pink slips, we saw bonuses.

We've had allegations made by the former chair of the board of Nalcor upon his departure, allegations of conflicts of interest. It was interesting. As I've said before, those allegations

only came out on his way out the door and referencing conflicts that he said he knew had existed prior to then. If he knew the conflicts had existed back a year ago, why didn't he bring it forward then? He only brought them forward when he got into a battle with the government of the day and decided now, all of a sudden, there was a conflict of interest.

If these things are not concerning to Members in this House, I don't know what would be concerning. I have written the Premier on two occasions. I have written the Auditor General on two occasions. I've met with him on two occasions. I've written the prime minister. I've raised it in this House of Assembly. Yet, there still does not seem to be a will to open the books. There still does not seem to be a will to do an audit, to do a thorough audit.

Mr. Marshall, as I said, is quoted right here as saying bring it on. He's suggesting bring it on. He doesn't have an issue with it. So if he has no issue with it, we have all this information out here, why don't we do it? I'm calling upon the government once again, let's get it done and find out if things have been done properly or if indeed there was false information put out there and so on. Let's get to the bottom of it. Whatever it is, we owe that to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; we really do.

I'm very passionate about this because I am one of the people – regardless of what I say after the fact – that will go down in this House of Assembly as voting for this, as voting for it based on what I was told. I really feel betrayed to be honest with you; that is how I feel. I'm sure other Members, in their quiet moments, probably feel the same because I know for a fact that other Members who were here at the time – I can't say everybody; I can't speak to what discussions may or may not have happened around the Cabinet table because I wasn't there. I don't know. But I can tell you around the caucus table that everybody voted for this based on the information and they thought they were doing the right thing, including me.

I'm not too happy about how things have turned out. I'm certainly not happy when I hear things like this that's saying there was falsified information and so on. That is very, very serious allegations. Why we would not want to get to

the bottom of that is beyond me. So I put it out there again, I think we need to the bottom of it.

That's not a reflection on any of my colleagues. I just wanted to say that for the record. They only went by what they were given.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** By who?

**MR. LANE:** By the people at Nalcor, the people in charge of the project and so on, people within the department and so on, giving that information.

**MS. MICHAEL:** You could have asked questions.

**MR. LANE:** Yes, I say to the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, you could have asked questions. There were questions asked. As a matter of fact, I can remember when the issue of the North Spur came up – which is still an outstanding issue today. I can remember when that issue came up. I can recall going to Nalcor's AGM at the Holiday Inn and the question was asked about the North Spur to the then CEO who referred it to the man in charge of the project. The man said: We're aware of the North Spur. We have an engineering solution in place and it's contained within the DG3 numbers, which at that time was at \$6 billion, not eleven point, whatever it is now – almost double.

That was said in a public meeting. So, yes, there were questions asked. There were questions asked about methylmercury. That issue came up and we were told there was no concern. Yes, methylmercury can have an impact but we're very confident that the mitigation will be put in place and there's nothing to worry about. Of course, now we see, only a number of months ago, where, as a result of protests and hunger strikes and everything else, more action is taken on methylmercury mitigation, which never would have happened other than the protests and so on.

So, yes, there were questions asked. I asked questions. All my colleagues, at the time, asked questions. But if you ask questions to the people who are in charge of the project, the people who are the engineers and the experts, supposedly, in that field and you ask questions and they give you the answers, you have to go by it. Unless

you're going to sit there and say: No, I don't believe you. You are lying to me.

**MS. MICHAEL:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. LANE:** The Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi, or whatever the district is, is saying she didn't believe it. Good for you. I'm glad. You were right in the end for not believing them; that's what I'm saying.

Anyway, we will move on and I will just simply say that it's still not too late to get to the bottom of what went on. The information is there; let's get to it.

Now, back to the budget – and I'm down to about nine minutes. I just heard the Member opposite – a Member who I have a lot of respect for, by the way, and I know she works very hard in her district – talk about working together and I agree with her, we should be working together. I've heard other Members, I heard the Premier talking about working together. I heard the Minister of Service NL yesterday talking about working together. The Member for Burin – Grand Bank, I'm not sure if he wants to work together. I'm not sure. I think he might want to work together. I think he might.

Anyway, if we want to work together – I agree with you; I really think we should be working together and the people believe we should be working together. Those are hollow words unless we actually do it. I would challenge the government, what do you mean by working together? I would ask you to define what you mean when you say working together. Because if working together means everything the government says we all stand up and agree with it and applaud it and say way to go, great job; if working together means we don't challenge any legislation at all, that we say yes, b'y, she's perfect like she is; even if we see issues, no, we're not going to bring that up because we're going to work together; if that means we're going to agree with everything in the budget because that is working together; if that's what it means, then I guess we're not going to work together.

But if we're truly serious about working together, then let's do it. Let's start looking at all-party committees as an example, legislative

committees, to review some of the legislation, particularly the bigger pieces of legislation, the more controversial legislation. Let's form a committee of Members from all sides to review that legislation when it's being drafted, before it reaches the floor of the House of Assembly so that we can all have some input and some suggestions.

That doesn't happen. It's never happened and it doesn't happen. Generally what happens – and this is not critical of this government. It was no different the other way when it was the other administration. Government says well, we're in charge, we're going to bring in the legislation and that's it. If the other side raises concerns or issues or tries to put in an amendment, they all get shot down. Because you can't give it to say that, geez, we never thought of that. That was a good idea. You can't give credit to the other side that maybe they thought of something that you didn't or raised a point that you never thought of; can't do that.

So if we were working together, as has been suggested, and we actually had legislative review committees made up of all parties and so on to do those reviews before it reached the floor of the House, maybe we could all agree in quiet so nobody has to be publicly acknowledge that you thought of something that I didn't. Maybe we could work together to craft legislation that everybody is generally happy with in a committee setting. And at the end of that process, you might clear up a few items and you might decide to disagree. You might decide to say we can agree to change this and this and this, but this issue here, we're firm this way and you were firm the other way. We'll argue it out on the floor of the House of Assembly and at least we'll have that public debate, but a lot of the good ideas, perhaps, that we could all agree on get resolved. That is what working together would look like I believe.

We had new procurement legislation brought in on the House of Assembly floor. We all agree with procurement reform. We all agree with that. We all voted for it and we all agreed with it. It was long overdue. It was a good idea. The only problem we had was that everything, pretty much, is in the details contained in the regulations. We have no idea – at some point in time in the next year or two those regulations

will be drafted and enacted. They might be the best regulations in the world, or they might be totally flawed. At the end of the day, nobody over here has any input whatsoever – none.

If it does turn out to be bad regulations then –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. LANE:** I say to the Member for Labrador West who is heckling again because it's funny how when you're saying stuff he likes, he is very quiet and everything, and the minute you say one thing that's either bit critical or even constructive criticism, all of a sudden he has to start yapping. It's amazing.

He says well – and I will address this point – maybe you should have stayed over there. But I would say to the Member that even if you were over there, the problem with our system is that you still don't have any input because you know, as well as I know, that when the legislation comes on the floor, not only does it not go through a committee process of all parties, it doesn't go through the backbench at all. Cabinet will take it and just bring it to the floor and everyone else is expected to support it. They had no input. They didn't even know what was in there and they're expected to act like a bunch of trained seals and pound on the desk. That's what they're expected to do.

That is the system. That is not critical of this administration versus the last or the one before that. That is the system unfortunately. That is the system. The system is flawed and we need to change that. If we want to start working together, then we need to change the system so that we can work together.

Members in the backbench of the government, whatever government it is, it doesn't matter what government it is, they should have input. They shouldn't find out about cuts in their district when they turn on VOXM. That's when it happens most times. You turn on VOXM and you find out all of a sudden this is happening and that's happening and you didn't know about it. Nobody asked for any input. That's wrong; we need to fix that.

Like I said, in terms of the actual parties, the government versus the Opposition and so on, we

need to be working together on legislation, as I was saying before I got interrupted, on the procurement legislation. We have new procurement legislation. All the details are going to be in the regulations. Nobody knows what it's going to be.

If we were truly serious about putting good procurement legislation that at some point in time, before those regulations went out, there would be input from all sides because that is such a serious piece of legislation and such serious regulations that will govern the spending of billions of dollars – billions. There should be input from the other side to say: These are the regulations. What do you think? Do you have any concerns? Is there anything you can see that we're missing, anything you can see that could make this better for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? That's what we would be doing.

Again, that is not being critical of this administration; it's critical of the system. Members don't need to go taking it personally. It's not a personal shot at anybody over there. It's the system. We want to work together; let's work together. There are so many other things, Madam Speaker, I could and I would love to say about the budget.

There are good things in this budget. The biggest concern that we have is that we have a continuation of all the taxes that we had from last year's budget. We cannot pretend that last year didn't happen because it did and it continues to happen. That's a serious issue that we all have on this side. Beyond that, there were some good things. There were some good initiatives like zero-based budgeting and so on, which I do agree with. There were some investments I agree with.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. LANE:** It's not all doom and gloom.

Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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



The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Harbour Main.

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

**MS. PARSLEY:** Good morning, it's a pleasure to rise in this hon. House to speak to *Budget 2017*. Any time you get up and represent your district, it's an honour.

Last year, as we all stood in this House to bring down *Budget 2016*, it was quite the budget, with a lot of cuts, a lot of surprises to try to put our province back on track with a plan that we knew, in order to function, we all had to work together, and that means on both sides of the House, to put this province back to the people who are so proud and still are.

None of us knew the financial state we were in. We knew we had to take swift action and that's what we did. So we're hoping to bring in surplus, to be on track by 2023, and to put back the heart into the people of this province.

Some things I am proud of during this year and that's complemented in our budget of the All-Party Committee on Addictions and Mental Health, and to see most of these recommendations be part of our *Budget 2017*. Our people are working very hard. Like I said, once again, we should really, really thank the people who worked on this committee because a lot of work went in and it certainly paid off.

As a former municipal leader, I was glad to see some of the issues for clean drinking water committed in the budget for \$43.5 million towards infrastructure, \$70.6 million in federal contributions. We, as a government, are so proud.

The Member for Cape St. Francis spoke yesterday from the heart and he spoke about municipal things. I have a lot of respect for him and the things that he spoke about were, this year being municipal week, we have some good points. I can tell you there is no greater reward than to be able to volunteer for your town and see your community and your people grow. You step up to the plate. This year being a municipal election year, I would like to remind everyone to go forward, put your name on the ballot. Like I said, there's no greater reward to watch a town

grow and prosper because of your work and commitment.

Most of us in this House of Assembly were either involved in municipal politics or mayors and we know the hard work and dedication. Through that hard work and dedication, it's wonderful. I had a group in this week from my own District of Harbour Main who met with our minister. When they walked away I got an email later on that evening, how impressed, how proud they were that he listened and he's willing to put forward a plan, a plan that they can go on and operate and keep our town going and be the town that it needs to be. This is the kind of commitment. When you see four or five people in the middle of an afternoon coming into the House of Assembly at 3 o'clock, that means they had to leave their job. They had to get permission to come in and meet, but that's what commitment is.

That's like the commitment here in the House of Assembly. Once you put your name forward and you run and you get elected as a Member – one of my colleagues from Harbour Grace – Port de Grave and Mount Pearl – Southlands mentioned that we're in this House for a reason. We're in this House to get along. We're in this House to get work done. That's one of the biggest things I focus on every day, of getting things for our district. To be able to go back to our proud people after a day here and say, look, we managed to get this, we managed to get that. We got a bit of money here, we got some money there. That's what commitment is.

I have a few notes here that I've scribbled down. This past Saturday evening I had the pleasure of attending the Cadet Southern Cross out in Holyrood. We had a number of cadets. We passed out awards. We spent the evening with them.

Actually, I had one of the young cadets in this House this week, young Brady Power, who was an example of what young people today are doing. He came and had the pleasure of spending the afternoon here in the House, and was so proud. He walked away feeling so good about it all.

So when you have a commitment to – later on that evening I attended the Harbour Main

volunteer dance. They had 118 certificates to pass out. Last week being Volunteer Week, it was quite an accomplishment. It's not only there; it's throughout the great District of Harbour Main, with Seal Cove, Upper Gullies, right into North River. Each one of these had events, groups, organizations and, unfortunately, you cannot get to them all.

My former colleague here went to the Battle of the Atlantic in Bay Roberts on Sunday, I went to Harbour Main. These are the kinds of commitments when you have a Member that's close to you. I have a Member also in CBS. We sometimes are in the same room doing functions together, and that's part of government I guess.

The other thing I really wanted to talk about is our seniors. I was so glad our government committed to keeping our seniors plan in because most of our seniors today depend on that. You'll get a phone call: When are the cheques in the mail? We're waiting to pay our phone bill; we're waiting to do this. This is a commitment that government made and it's a good commitment, because our seniors are the backbone of our communities. They made us who we are today. They were the ones who battled the fields and put in the hard work so today we could become who we are. Without our seniors today we have nothing.

To do a project in school, no matter what it is, the children are coming back to ask grandma and grandpa what it was like back then. Of course back then, that's really old to them because they didn't know what social media or iPhones or anything like that was.

Like I said, I spoke to a councillor this weekend in Holyrood who told me they hired a bus and travelled out to Bull Arm to tour the site before the rig was towed out. That was big. There were 75 or 80 of them on the bus.

I just realized this morning, June 1, Holyrood and CBS are hosting a tradeshow and entertainment for our seniors. I think the Red Cross might be involved with that. That is so wonderful because it shows that people are getting out, they're doing things. That's so important.

The other thing I'd like to elaborate on is our fire departments. Our fire departments are so important. I attended the fire department banquet in Avondale last Saturday night. There were an awful lot of volunteer firemen there, firewomen, but do you know what the most important thing about all that was? Someone had told me, 30 years they were in existence then, operating basically on their own. The women's association turning over something like 2,200. This group of women do whatever they have to do to support the fire department. They sometimes don't have to look for government, they did come to me this year for a few things, but they do it on their own, and that's so important.

Everybody who's called to that fire department, they're on call 24-7, especially with the TCH there in Avondale, Holyrood. There was a fire there in Harbour Main a couple of years ago. Harbour Main, Avondale, they all attend the same one; the one down further are all into a different category.

It's so important that the men and women of our province work together because by them working together, it gives us the pleasure of working for them here in the House. We have great ministers here in this House. No matter what we're looking for, we go to them. They almost feel like saying, don't come near me; but we're always looking for something for our constituents.

I'd like to talk a little bit now for a second on tourism. Just bear with me for a second. Our Minister of Tourism has been – we have a lot of great things in our district. We have the Brigus Blueberry Festival where people for a whole weekend prey on the Town of Brigus. They're from all over the world. They come home. They actually plan their weekends to be here for that event.

There's Cupids where John Guy landed. I mean that's the whole of the district. Some others are Holyrood squid jigging festival. I just saw the lineup just recently. They're already booking; people are coming home to it. It's a four-day event. It's designed for families, for seniors, everything. These are some of the cultural things in the district.

I'm sure Avondale has the racetrack where NASCAR was just introduced last year. I happened to be a part of that, that afternoon when they opened it up in there. Let me tell you, the work they do and the monies passed over to different organizations, it's a credit –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Eastbound Hoedown.

**MS. PARSLEY:** Yes, the Eastbound Hoedown. I haven't been to one yet. You know what, these are great things. When we can stand here as a government today and support these initiatives and keep people going, that's what's bringing into our province the tourism piece. Our minister has talked about it so much in the past while. Tourism is the backbone.

We talk about the fishery, we talk about other things, but when you see the spinoffs from tourism, the gas, the snack bars, everything is revenue coming in. That's what's so important to small towns; like I said, Avondale. Seal Cove has its own history out there, but going back down to Brigus, Cupids, these are big.

I'm hoping some of the initiatives this year we passed out – Avondale Heritage and Conservation, we passed out over \$11,000; Cupids Legacy, \$32,960; Brigus Historical and Conservation Society, we passed out \$22,000; Turk's Gut in Marysvalle, \$1,060; Oceans Holyrood Initiative phase, \$43,481 and more to come. That's what you call commitment from government.

Without that commitment – I know in our budget we had to tax the people. It wasn't a great place to be last year. It truly wasn't a great place to be in your district. It certainly is a great place to be today because I can tell you since the budget was brought down I've attended all these events I just named and there's no one comes back at me. You get a few grumbles, yes, but you'll always have that. You'll always have complainers; you'll always have people who just want to sit there and complain. Do you know what? That's a part of life. But, for the more positive, positivity is the answer, especially right now where we're moving on to a better a direction.

I'd like to talk too about our seniors for a minute, if we got a minute here. Our seniors are

really, really active. More active than some of us, I think. Anyway, getting back to it, I'm very pleased with what's happening. I'm hoping to be able to deliver more grants, more monies – last year around December we went to every event for the seniors. It was a great, great time.

The clean drinking water is another thing. This was in their infrastructure, and let me tell you, there's nothing as important as clean drinking water in our province. If you don't have clean drinking water, you don't have towns and you don't have anything. So I'm really pleased about the money allotted for that.

Now, before I kind of finish up I'd like to talk for a minute on the non-confidence motion that went nowhere. I'm over here on this side of the House, I'm not usually one to get up and slander or say things to my colleagues over there, because I respect them all, and we all came to this House to do a job. I'm sure each and every one of us have the best intentions, it's our role to get up and sometimes not to be nice, but I don't have it in me, I'm sorry. But I am going to talk about this for a moment.

The Opposition are still enraged by the fees this week. They moved a motion of a non-confidence vote in the government. The Member for Mount Pearl North argued the government should fall, saying the House condemns the government for maintaining all but one of the 300 taxes and fees increased that they imposed on people in our last years' budget. That exception was extra provincial gas tax, which will be cut from an additional 16.5 cents to 4 cents by December.

With a solid Liberal majority, a non-confidence motion was barely the end. The motion was easily defeated, and the government survived for another day. It may be great politics, but when it comes to policy, the idea that the government can simply wipe away unpopular taxes is a fantasy. When government needs money, it really only has three ways to get it. It can raise taxes, borrow it from lenders or cut what we spend.

So what are our alternatives? We cannot borrow any money; we're just getting our credit rating back. We can't put any more pressure on our province or our people. We can't lay off. We're

trying to run this government with a group of people, and it's not an easy thing to do when you get up every morning and you worry about the people of your province or you're going somewhere and you're wondering, okay, what's going to come next.

We are on the right track. Our Finance Minister has led us into a position where we can stand proud. I think she should be proud for the budget that she delivered in 2017. It was a great budget; it wasn't like last year, so maybe we're on the right track. And if we continue to support our towns, support our people and support one another, most importantly in this House, we can get a lot of work done.

Our all-party committees are important. *The Way Forward* plan, it's coming together, and we need time. We need time now to go back into our districts, talk to our people and see what the alternatives are. Once again, I'm going to –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Talk about the Internet (inaudible).

**MS. PARSLEY:** Oh yes, the Internet; broadband is important in my district. The people of Colliers and Kitchuses have been fighting for a long while for Internet. There are families down there who have children – a couple with autism. There's no way they can get on the Internet; there's no way the children can research their projects for the next day for school. The parents have to come home in the evening and drive them to a library. We are in the process now of hopefully, with a partnership with the federal government, of looking at that. Everybody has a right to Internet, everybody has a right to be informed and that's what is important.

I'm going to take my seat right now. Like I said, it was an honour to stand up and speak here in this House today.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Indeed, it's an honour to stand again this morning as we debate the 2017-2018 budget. I got a lot of views that I want to share, a lot of things I want to talk about as part of this budget and the impact it's going to have. But I also want to keep it relevant to last year's budget because not only are we debating this year's budget and the impact it has on people, but we can't let people forget about what happened last year and the accumulative effect its having on people now.

It's having an effect; people are still having to live with the dramatic increases in taxes, fee services, cuts to services. We are still seeing out-migration as a result of that, and it's unfortunate.

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

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

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

We have a responsibility when people send you an email or they handwrite a letter to outline their concern. As I said earlier, most citizens realize government has a responsibility. There are certain decisions that have to be made. But what's being told to us and what people are sharing with us are their heart-wrenched experiences that are really having a negative effect on their lives. It's affecting not only their lives, but it's affecting everybody around them, their ability to do the parts that they would in a respective community.

Their fear for families – older couples are telling me they don't know if they're going to be able to see their grandchildren grow up here because the economy is at a point now where it's just not viable for the kids to stay here. They don't have access to certain things. That becomes a worry.

The older population are worried about their access to health care, their ability to be able to pay their own bills down the road and all the other extra services. Also, their hope was that they'd have a better quality of life as they got older and that becomes a concern. Most are willing to pay some extra money for even the base services that we have; they're willing to do that. But when they see nickel-and-dime services being cut that have a dramatic effect on people, then that becomes an issue.

The issue here is around quality of life and the simple things that people think are ingrained in what we accept here as being necessary. We're not talking big elaborate things. People are not talking about that we light up every highway from here to Port aux Basques, that we have four lanes everywhere. These are things people would like for safety, but they realize we can only sustain certain things over certain periods of time. With a small population, the tax base can only be where it can be and government can only spend in certain areas.

I know being a former minister and my colleagues here and I know the ministers over there, their budgets are nowhere near what they would need to run their line departments and the services they'd like to provide. Nobody ever argues that point. The argument has been and the outcry and the backlash has been around the cuts that have been made over the last 18 months and the impact that it's had. Particularly around the fact that the cuts are not only having a direct impact to those that it affects, it's having a cumulative effect on growing our economy, sustaining quality of life, ensuring that the population is here so that the older generation has somebody to care for them and provide basic services. That becomes some of the challenges that we're facing here.

That's what I wanted to go back to again. Because there may have been a lull a couple of months ago that people were going back to the mainstream activities that they did and they were adjusting to the cuts and levies which they're now seeing in their income tax claims as part of this process now, but people were also hopeful that this budget would give them back something, would eliminate some of the hardships. Then they could say: Yes, we did our part. We understand government had to do certain things. We didn't agree with it all but if it's got us to a better place and now we can get back to the quality of life and the services we need, then that's a win-win.

The problem and the disappointment here is they didn't see any of that. None of that occurred. There wasn't any other plan that here's what we've taken away but because of the process and the plan we put in place, the diversification of our industries and the attraction of new partnerships and contracts, we've been able to

alleviate some of those expenditures by improving the economy. We've improved the economy because we've managed to secure outside investors or new industries, or we've taken a lead on certain things that we promoted that we haven't in the past, but that hasn't happened. As a matter of fact, it's gone the opposite.

We haven't gotten to a point where businesses are confident on what's being done here. We're not at a point where the average citizen is willing to spend their savings because they don't know what else is about to come. We're not at a point where small businesses are willing to expand their businesses because they're not sure; they first have to plan for the rainy day.

The rainy day used to be, unfortunately, if something happened in your business. The rainy day here with small business, what I'm being told, is what's the next tax grab that's going to come from government? What's the next regulation that's going to cost them a fortune? We're not talking about safety and personal well-being of people. They're things that any industry and all citizens realize as we grow and we modernize that certain things have to be put into play. These are just things that are being added.

I heard my colleague get up yesterday and ask a question about the iceberg tax. When it gets to that level then there's a real concern here of what the focus is by government, what the plan is, and where they're going with it. If they're getting that nickel and dime, and spending that much time to come up with a tax, an added 5,000 or 6,000 per cent for a few companies that may harvest some icebergs, that are creating jobs in a lot of cases in some rural communities. They're paying taxes to the local municipalities; they're also, in certain cases, hiring Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and they're also helping promote not only their industry but our tourist industry, because it's part of who we are. It's part of how we promote. We're a unique destination and people should come here.

We're going to put them on the edge of driving them out of business. Because I doubt if most of these are extremely lucrative, million-dollar businesses, but they do their part to ensure there's sustainable employment for the

employees they have, that the communities benefit from it. No doubt they're investing in buildings; they're investing in these types of things.

So when we started hearing these are new taxes, I thought we were over the taxing. I thought last year 300-plus tax and fee increases was enough, but we did get a reprieve on one. Over a period of time we're getting part and parcel of reprieves there. We'll get something June 1, and we'll get something December 1. That's a welcome. I don't think anybody is against that. What they're against is the other 299 and maybe 300 now, if you add in the iceberg tax.

There has to be a process here. People need to have some hope. The hope here that we're going to move things forward and here's our plan to do it. We can have a task force and a committee on jobs. That's fine, but 18 months later – that process should have been put in the day you started governing of what your process was going to be.

There was a great talk about diversification. Again, I keep going back to all the niche words and the niche phrases, the Throne Speeches and all that. It had me, it had me included. I was saying, yes. I was a cheerleader for you guys. If you can do all this, good for you guys, this will help our province. None of it materialized, absolutely none of it. Not one thing came to fruition that was positive for here.

You have a great partnership with the feds. You're leveraging money, but these are standards money. This is a part of what Newfoundland and Labrador is entitled to. It's just you're going to frontload it versus the next number of years, then there'll be less money to be able to draw down on. So that's fine, and that's your choice. I have no problem. We had a different choice, we spread it out. We spread it out over years. Some governments do it that way, that's fine, but don't tout that there's all this extra money coming here because it isn't. It's the allocations for each of the regions, allocations for the provinces.

Now, you would have impressed me if we had something that said equalization in 2017-2018 was going to be \$1.2 billion, like some of our other Atlantic friends. Then I would have been

impressed and I would have said good job. A good relationship between the federal Liberals and the provincial Liberals, good to see the seven MPs have gone to bat for us. Good to see that while they were knocking doors for you, they also had a plan. When they got elected they'd ensure that if we went on the same wave it would work well. That didn't happen. It didn't happen at all.

Again, it gets you thinking, where are you with the master plan? I'm looking for the master plan. As part of it, as you would look at it – I think even one of the premiers, Brad Wall had said, because they're receiving no equalization either. They're like us, one of the few provinces that don't. He said there is no reason why the federal government shouldn't sit down and negotiate.

Now, more of a reason in Newfoundland and Labrador why they should, we have seven Liberal MPs. A whole contingent of elected MPs in the House of Commons is of the same stripe of the government. We have a provincial Liberal government. No doubt, a lot of these same MPs campaigned for, and rightfully so. That's perfect.

We're fortunate here that some of the people who got elected provincially worked for some of these MPs – great. What a great experience. What a great partnership. That's even a better process there. So how come we can't develop that partnership and can't get them to go bang the drum and say Newfoundland and Labrador has hit a financial lull. It hit it because of the oil prices that nobody can control, as did Saskatchewan, as did Alberta

We're asking for a part of the process that's already in play. Equalization is not new. We relied on it for decades, and then we were fortunate enough to be able to get off and do our part to be able to give back so other provinces that happen to be in economic downturns would be able to avail of it.

We still have some provinces that can avail of it. We still have some provinces that are fortunate enough – I don't know how they do it, great on the books – can not only have a balanced budget but a surplus budget and reduce their taxes, yet still receive massive amounts of equalization. I say good on them. Obviously their premier and

their government negotiated with the federal government and came up with something that was equitable and fair.

The question we have here and the question I pose here, why can't we do the same. It's not only about having to negotiate some back and forth, we're not even hearing that there's any discussion. That's the alarming part here; we're not even hearing any discussion.

If I knew the Premier was up every week or some of his Cabinet colleagues, or the MPs were down here and you were having dialogue and you were trying to look at the formula and you were trying to look, is there a loophole here that works or something that's reasonable, what are the one-offs? If there was something there that could be done that would best fit our financial situation here so that the average Newfoundlander and Labradorian wouldn't have to be the people who are bailing out the situation here. We're a partnership in this country. So when one sister or brother gets in trouble, all the rest of us are supposed to be there to support them. In this case it's not happening.

This is not an indication here where all of a sudden we're building 200 new hospitals that we don't need. The basic things that have been outlined in our budgets are things that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians wanted and need. They're just basic services.

Some things are investments in things that are going to drive the economy around tourism, around mineral investments, around hydroelectric power. These are the types of things that you would see from a federal point of view: well, it's a good opportunity to invest in Newfoundland and Labrador. They've done that in some cases, and I say good for you guys. They've done that. They've supported some of the things that were already in play, which makes sense with some of the programs.

In the case now where equalization, because of our downturn in the economy, and because of our bottom line financially, would be the right route. It's an accessible route, and it's been an operational standard. Why we can't avail of that – we still got to be frugal in what we do. We have no qualms about decisions having to be made by the government of the day that are

frugal and are in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and become sustainable as part of that process. It's a difference between them being frugal and sustainable and at the end of the day cutting the necessities, the base things that people need and death by a thousand cuts. That's what's happening here.

People are getting so dejected. The hope we had here, the spirit we had is very quickly dwindling. That's because people are not seeing any light at the tunnel. They're not being reassured that things are not only going to get better, that we have a government that's going to bat for them on whatever it may be. We're not seeing any of that. We're seeing sometimes petty things are being, what's the big debate is around, instead of debating the big issues here and being unified.

We're game here on this side to unify about going on a common fight for equalization that we're entitled to. We're equal to say that the other partners in Canada who have a downswing because they relied so much on the mineral industry, particularly the oil industry for their income, have had a downturn. They need some supports so they can still sustain their quality of life for their citizens, and they can still ensure that the existing industries they have don't falter and move somewhere else, because it's not just about being so reliant on one type of industry.

The oil is very important to us, as is the fishing industry and the mineral industry and the tourism industry, the aquaculture industry, the manufacturing industry, the IT industry, all the things, they have different roles and they're at different levels of generating revenue for us and employment, but they all have an important stake here. But the minute you financially – because of the downswing in one of them – don't have something to offset that, and if you don't have an industry that can pick it up – like Ontario diversifies at certain times.

If manufacturing goes down, their research and deployment comes up; their IT division, they manage to balance it out. Even in their downswing in the construction industry and in the manufacturing, they have equalization, and rightfully so. We were a part of being able to pay to help Ontario get over their hump and now Ontario is starting to flourish again.

Manufacturing is up. Every day I hear from friends in Ontario about new jobs. Do you know anybody who's looking for a job? You can actually go up there, like it was a decade ago. So that's part and parcel (inaudible).

They managed to be able to take their investments, ensure they didn't overtax businesses. They attracted new industries. They made sure their citizens stayed in their province and would ride out the downward swing in the economy because it wasn't too devastating to them. It wasn't cutting their health care. It wasn't cutting their education. It wasn't cutting their plan for the future and their retirement.

That's not what we've done here. We've devastated our education system here. We have more demands on our education system but we have no plan to address inclusive education, overcrowding. We've cut some core programs and services that were considered natural ones.

You talk about Core French. We're in a bilingual country. You would think any kid who wants to have access to that in Newfoundland and Labrador, should have access to it. So when we cut programs like that, then it starts to question whether or not we're open, that we want to be able to compete nationally and internationally and have our citizens and our students equipped to be able to do whatever they want to do. As the old cliché says, and I read a petition yesterday: Be everything they want to be. But you can't do that when you limit their choices. That's what we've done.

We've talked about cuts to our post-secondary; programs are going to be eliminated. We're talking about fee increases across the board. That has an impact because there's less revenue coming in. Nobody disputes that, but we have an ability here to generate some of that revenue. One is: Have a plan that draws industry business here. Have a plan with your partners in Ottawa that they support what you're trying to do here, and they have a mechanism to support that.

It's not just small pots of money for investments here on waste water or road development or ferry improvements; it's about a cash value so that governments can go back and review the negative things they put in play that are having a

major impact on people's lives here. It's a simple solution.

This should have been started 18 months ago, no doubt about it. My understanding is it hasn't because we haven't heard about it, or there are secret negotiations going on, which is great, that's fine. Maybe we're going to get to somewhere and there's going to be a big announcement and we'll get it, but we're into the second budget now and the second budget that the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador have to take the brunt of.

The same where companies are having to shut one of their vehicles down because of the extra tax on insurance, the gas tax, all the other fees and services here, the extra tax it costs to register your vehicle. They've got to find ways because they can't up the cost of the service they provide anymore because people, the citizens, have less disposable income. It's a balance here.

It's different if we all had this big influx and everybody knew that they had six-figure bank accounts, well, you could do that because you'd say it's time people dipped into a little bit of their savings to get us over the hump. So if they have to pay a little more to register their car or they have to pay for a medical procedure of some sort, if they have to get the diabetic strips, we're only giving them so many, they have to do that. Or they've got to take care of their ailing mother who's in an institution and there are certain services not provided anymore, that's fine and dandy, you'd make that balance.

Everything in society and everything in governance is about balance. You've got your citizens who are going to drive your economy; you've got citizens who have to pay the tax base. That's how you generate your money. And you hope then, you take that and you invest it in programs and services that provide a quality of life for them, but also are incentives for businesses because you get a good business tax. Business tax brings industry, industry brings employment, employment brings tax and brings stability, brings quality of life. It's a cycle.

The minute you take one of those spokes out of that wheel you've got a problem, and that's what's here. It's no doubt sometimes you may have to loosen one of those spokes or tighten



them, depending on what you have to do to ensure that wheel keeps going around and around. To do that, you've got to make sure you have a plan because the first spoke and the 50th spoke all have to go in motion and they all have to support each other. When one is a little bit weaker, the other one has to be able to pick up and be a little bit stronger.

That's what we haven't seen. We haven't seen any plan where there's an industry down now and the industry down is the oil industry. How do we support the tourism industry, the aquaculture industry, the fishing industry, the industrial industry here, the manufacturing, the IT industry? We haven't done that. There hasn't been a plan to say while we're waiting for the oil industry to rebound, we're doing our part to support that, but here is how we're addressing the other five or six key industries that are in this province that we could build on and make sure that the economy keeps moving forward. There has been no plan.

The biggest criticism that I hear outside of all the other things – and I'll get a chance to read one of these days the 20 or so little tidbits that people have sent me talking about their labelling the government – the biggest thing, the biggest disappointment: That there is no plan. The disappointment there is because during the campaign there was a plan. The plan was they were going to deal with these key things. They were going to have a great working relationship with Ottawa. It was going to mean billions of dollars in revenue here and partnerships, all that was going to move forward.

They were going to improve everything around education and health care. They were going to diversify the economy. All these things were outlined and people bought into it because it made sense. I think it was a good sell. The red book made sense, if you read it. The difference is reading something and implementing, two different things. The problem becomes, when people talk about the plan, it's not only did they not implement it; it doesn't seem they even tried to implement it. That they had a process they were going to use to implement it. It's just fly-by-night. Day by day, flip-flop back on what our view is on one process or how we're going to drive an industry one week and then we'll see

what some other jurisdiction is doing, to see if we can play on those.

That's not what people voted you in for. You were voted in, you got a majority and (inaudible).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll get a chance to speak again in the near future.

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

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

I know we're edging on to lunch hour, but I couldn't resist but take the opportunity to stand, especially given some of the comments that I heard earlier from the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, as it related to ferries.

Mr. Speaker, as everyone would know, my district holds the Marystown Shipyard. And what is the topic du jour lately? It's about jobs. The Premier, we know, announced a Cabinet Committee on Jobs yesterday and it appears the only jobs plan that the other crowd had was for Romania because they didn't even bother to allow Marystown the opportunity to compete for the ferries; having to big, old ferries built over in Romania, Mr. Speaker. It's shocking.

Then not only did they have them built in Romania, forgot to build the wharf. Now the *Legionnaire* is tied up in Lewisporte acting as spare parts for the *Veteran*. Talk to the Member for Fogo, he'll tell you the colossal mishap that is now the *MV Veteran*. The *Legionnaire* is tied up in Lewisporte as spare parts. They had to get a pick-up truck to go down to get a panel out of the *Legionnaire* and bring it to Farewell. That's a ferry that could have been built in Marystown. It wouldn't have been built in Harbour Grace but it could have been done in Marystown, I say, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to talk about the trip that the Member opposite had to Romania, cost \$10,153.40. The trip was apparently about negotiations with Damen about servicing the ferries once in Newfoundland and Labrador. Fair enough, you have to negotiate about the servicing of the ferries, but the outcome of those negotiations, given the fact that the *Legionnaire* is spare parts

for the *Veteran*, the outcome of the negotiations was a colossal failure, Mr. Speaker, I say to the Members opposite.

Then, not only that, Mr. Speaker, forget the fact that the jobs left the Burin Peninsula, jobs left Newfoundland and Labrador and went to Romania and certainly other shipyards like Glovertown, Clarenville and Harbour Grace, but then there were tariffs. The homework was never done on this. The homework was never done, and \$25 million was the bill that was waiting for this government when we took office because the justification used was that a ferry sunk out in British Columbia and was exempted from the tariffs. So by a big plan to make two ferries, we'll be exempt as well.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in a letter on May 4, from then Minister Joe Oliver, he said, "he cannot recommend" the removal of the tariff ... such a move would "undermine the duty remission framework."

That's straight from the horse's mouth here, Mr. Speaker. That's straight from the minister of the day in the Conservative government of Stephen Harper. So when the Members opposite rise and ask, where are the Liberal MPs, where are the former employees of those MPs who now sit as MHAs? Oh, we're here, Mr. Speaker. We are here, and I can tell you we're delivering results for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and our MPs are delivering results for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** One example, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure they want an example and I'm happy to provide it. Your \$25 million tariff was relieved because Judy Foote went to work and got it relieved. It's one of many actions that Judy Foote and our colleagues in Ottawa have taken to relieve us of the financial pressures that we're facing here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So, Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that I had no choice but to stand in an era, in a time of fake news. We have to identify what is correct and what is not.

The Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island knows, he's over there chirping now but

he knows that the only job plan they had was for Romania, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't for the people of the Burin Peninsula; it wasn't for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm going to say that the ferry should have at least had the opportunity to be built in Marystown, Mr. Speaker. They have fabulous work, they have wonderful workmanship and I'm very proud of the history of shipbuilding in Marystown and beyond. So this is the history, this is the legacy they talk of, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you that as we move forward as a government my eye is on the ball. We're going to be creating jobs and economic growth in Newfoundland and Labrador, and I'm very, very pleased to have the Premier's announcement yesterday on a Cabinet committee on jobs. It is much needed and it is time, Mr. Speaker.

The Oppositions response to that: too late, too late. Well, after 12 years in power with jobs going to Romania, Mr. Speaker, I would say it's right on time. We have opportunities in mining, in aquaculture and agriculture, and this is just the beginning, Mr. Speaker. It is just the beginning.

All I can say is that I hope the next time ferries are built that we don't have a \$25 million tariff facing whoever comes into power and that we don't have a ferry tied up in Lewisporte acting as spare parts for the *MV Veteran*.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I move, seconded by the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, that debate be now adjourned.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that the debate be now adjourned.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

This House is recessed until 2 o'clock this afternoon, being Private Members' Day.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

Today we welcome to our public galleries Paula Corcoran-Jacobs and Stephenie Kennedy, the executive director and president of CHANNAL. They are here for the reading of a Member's statement.

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

**Statements by Members**

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

The hon. the Member for Lewisporte – Twillingate.

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

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

The Twillingate Lions Club has, for over 64 years, been instrumental in serving the people of Twillingate Island and the surrounding area.

The club has spent countless hours helping to organize community special events including the annual Santa Claus parade, the seniors Christmas dinner, the Fish, Fun and Folk Festival, as well as mentor a Leo Club for youth in the Twillingate area. Their efforts are enjoyed by many at each of these events.

The current 34-member club can proudly boast donations in excess of \$42,000 in this past year alone. Some of the recipients of those funds include: \$12,000 to the elementary school computer program; \$10,000 to the Twillingate Fire Department, with an additional \$6,000 towards the purchase of new bunker gear; \$10,000 to the Community Wheels Busing Program; \$4,000 to the Notre Dame Bay auxiliary club, and with the support also offered two school food programs and the construction of a shed for the local food bank.

I ask all Members in this hon. House to join me in thanking the Twillingate Lions Club for the devoted service they provide to the people of Twillingate, and indeed the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. BRAGG:** Mr. Speaker, once again I'm delighted to inform my colleagues of the outstanding community spirit in my district.

Last Sunday, I took part in a tea party at the Centreville-Wareham-Trinity Lions hall. I was one of over 20 butlers, dressed in black pants, white shirt, black tie and a top hat to serve over 240 ladies. It was a traditional tea party with the finest tea sets, cakes, cookies and decorations. Although this was not their first tea party, this one was special.

Gary and Jennifer Cutler, both from CWT, were childhood sweethearts who married and moved away. In 2011, Jennifer was diagnosed with cancer.

Gary started the Jennifer A. Cutler Foundation in her honour after she lost her battle with the dreaded disease. Each year, this foundation will sponsor a different family affected by cancer to visit Walt Disney World. What started as an idea became a reality on Sunday when they raised \$4,472 in just 2 hours.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking everyone for their outstanding support.

Just believe, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this past week I had the honour to participate in the Unity in our community drug awareness committee on Bell Island. The newly formed organization was established to address

the issues of addictions faced by all ages of society in the community.

They have as their main theme the focus of uniting all sectors of the community to support, education, engage and in some cases, heal those who are facing challenges with addictions. The group holds weekly meetings in which presenters from various backgrounds and professions share their knowledge and expertise to help equip the committee to achieve their goals.

The committee is made up of medical professionals, business people, community leaders, educators, students, parents, seniors and most importantly, those who have been experiencing a personal impact as the result of addictions. The committee has established a website to promote the work of the committee and is reaching out to other communities to partner and share experiences.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the founding member for fostering the establishment of the group, Mayor Gary Gosine.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating and thanking Unity in our community drug awareness committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. BROWNE:** Mr. Speaker, often we rise in this hon. House to acknowledge outstanding individuals. However, when committed individuals come together, organizations and businesses also prove themselves worthy of special mention.

Such is the case with Arnold's Cove Foodland, which for the second time has been selected for the Foodland Store of the Year Award, as well as being nominated for the Winning Conditions Award. Considering there are 27 stores in the province, being chosen twice is truly indicative of great things happening at the store in Arnold's Cove.

First owned and operated by Mr. Freeman Wareham, the store opened in 1964. The current owner, Marie Peach, began working there herself in 1975 and would go on to become the owner and operator starting in August of 2006. Marie and her 27 employees make a special effort to ensure the shopper's experience is the best it can be. Having visited Arnold's Cove Foodland many times, I can attest to the friendly service and prompt attention that awaits every customer.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Marie and her staff on this award, and to wish the Arnold's Cove Foodland many more years of serving the people of the area with distinction.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to welcome a community organization to my district. CHANNAL is the only consumer-led mental health organization in our province. The organization runs many mental health initiatives, including their weekly Peer Support groups as well as the Warm Line.

The Warm Line deserves recognition. The service, which runs 12 hours a day, seven days a week, is an evidence-based resource and a best practice in mental health services. It supports people province-wide who are living with mental health issues with trained peer supporters who have also had to manage their own mental health issues. The non-crisis, non-emergency line has been a fantastic success.

In the year since it's been operating, it has received over 6,000 calls, which points to the need for such a program. Had the Warm Line not existed, 37 per cent of callers admit they would have used emergency services, but were instead served by CHANNAL. I was very lucky enough to attend CHANNAL's grand opening in Pleasantville on May 1, and their new facility is a wonderful space.

I ask all hon. Members to join with me in congratulating CHANNAL for their hard work and dedication to improve mental health in our province.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform my hon. colleagues about eight exceptional students from Holy Spirit High School in Conception Bay South who have been invited to join the Newfoundland and Labrador 2017 Skills Canada Team.

The Holy Spirit High School students joining Team NL for 2017 are: Erica Bennett, Website Development; Megan Coles, Workplace Safety; Caitlyn Coles, TV Video Production; Keagan Dalley, 3D Computer Animation; Maya Dalley, Graphic Design; Haley Moriarity, Job Search; Ian Brake, IT Office Software Applications; Emily Howe, TV Video Production.

These students will be competing at the 23rd annual Skills Canada National Competition in Winnipeg on May 31. Skills Canada NL has identified 44 students and apprentices within the province that will compete and this competition inspires students and apprentices to continue the tradition of excellence in fields of skilled trades and technologies.

Mr. Speaker, this is indeed an honour, and I ask all hon. Members to join me in wishing them the best of luck as they go on to compete at the national level.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** All hon. Members will be delighted to hear that the Member's statement – police didn't have to write any citations today, none of the statements were over one minute and 20 seconds.

Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

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

**MR. BYRNE:** There goes that rule, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the hon. House of some program improvements to the Job Creation Partnerships Program which Members and our constituents will recognize as a very valuable program for community and personal development.

This program, Mr. Speaker, supports projects that provide Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with opportunities to gain work experience and improve their employment prospects. It is supported by over \$7 million through the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Development Agreement.

This year, Mr. Speaker, we have enhanced the application process to be more responsive to emerging needs throughout the entire province, including, and especially, rural and remote areas. Applications may now be submitted for processing at any time until September 15, 2017. Previously, Mr. Speaker, applications were subject to either a winter, summer or a fall deadline, after which they were processed.

In order to help create jobs, the provincial government must engage in partnerships with employers, community organizations and workers. A unique aspect of this program, Mr. Speaker, is that approved projects must benefit not only the participant but the community at large.

The Job Creation Partnerships Program is an effective example of collaboration that can be targeted to each region's unique needs.

I encourage hon. Members to inform their community organizations and their constituents of this increased flexibility within the JCP Program.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The NL Job Creation Partnerships is an important source for many. These community projects create jobs that will provide unemployed residents with the opportunity to gain meaningful work experience. Without question, Job Creation Partnerships are vital to our society because they benefit both the participant and the community.

While the Liberal administration praises itself for temporary fixes, I will remind the Members opposite that it was this side of the House that created an environment where we had the lowest percentage of population receiving social assistance than ever recorded.

I recognize government for enhancing this program and hope the government can soon realize the need to foster an environment that provides permanent employment for the residents of our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**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. Job Creation Partnerships is important for communities throughout the province. People working through this program have helped councils and community groups improve their facilities. They have helped to develop heritage sites, as well as regional trails that bring tourists to communities.

It's good to see the application process streamlined to give applicants more flexibility. I'm very happy to thank the minister without any qualifications.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Two more projects for you.

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

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I thank all hon. Member for the applause when I stand. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, today, on Municipal Awareness Day, I respectfully ask that we appreciate the important role that residents, volunteers and local governments play in building and maintaining strong communities in our province.

The staff of the Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment work closely with communities to ensure that they have strong local governance, a solid network of emergency services, and that they can access and share quality services and infrastructure.

This morning, I was pleased to be able to join the Town of Torbay, and the Member for Cape St. Francis, for some of the events that they planned for Municipal Awareness Day. They included the opening of the new municipal depot, which was made possible in part by contributions from our government's Municipal Capital Works Program.

Approximately \$100 million in funding for a new three-year municipal infrastructure program was announced through *Budget 2017*, and we are pleased to be partnering with federal and municipal governments to achieve even more funding for infrastructure. We are investing in projects that support priorities of clean water and waste water, disaster mitigation, and the sharing of services and infrastructure between communities. As part of *The Way Forward*, our government has committed to leverage federal infrastructure funds at every opportunity to maximize investments while restoring fiscal balance.

Last week, we attended the Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador Symposium and met with many of the volunteers and officials that we are recognizing today. We discussed their concerns and looked for solutions to challenges that we are all facing together. We believe that by working together with all levels of government and by joining with the

stakeholders such as Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and Professional Municipal Administrators, we are stronger and we will succeed in our common goal of safe and sustainable communities.

Once again, I would like to extend the warmest thank you to everyone across the province who works every day to build communities in which Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can work, live and raise their families in security and pride.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**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 an advance copy of his statement. I also want to thank him for coming to the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis this morning. It was a pleasure to join him, along with municipal leaders, to make acknowledgement of Municipal Awareness Week.

Today provides a great opportunity to recognize many local leaders throughout our province and thank them for the important work they do. I was lucky enough to be involved in municipal government for many years and enjoyed it very much.

I know first-hand the amount of work that goes in to making communities sustainable and successful. I also know how rewarding that work can be. In fact, I want to encourage individuals to become more involved in their communities with their local governments, especially this year being a municipal election year.

I commend all the councils, staff and municipalities throughout our province. I know a great majority of them are volunteers and I want to thank them for everything they do for the betterment of our communities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We all celebrate the wonderful service municipalities provide, yet many small towns say they have been blindsided by government.

The Combined Councils of Labrador say changes to cost-sharing arrangements government announced in March have hurt them, and they've written some of us about that. Small communities who struggled to raise 10 per cent of matching funds in the past have no hope of meeting 60-40 or 50-50 funding arrangements. I urge the minister to do something to address the crisis of his own making.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

Yesterday here in the House, the Minister of Natural Resources said that the Muskrat Falls Oversight Committee is working to develop the framework for the go forward with the EY; however, on January 13 of this year the Premier promised that the final EY report would be released within a couple of weeks. The minister has said they're still working on the framework.

I ask the Premier: When will we see the final report and the costs associated with it?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to answer the question.

I will say this, when I referenced the framework to go forward, it was exactly that. How will we use the kind of independent assessment tools that EY does bring?

When I spoke about that it was in the second phase of my question. The first part of it was: When will we finish the EY report that was put forward last April? There is a report under review right – not a report, but the work is underway with the Oversight committee to finalize the report from last year, and the Oversight Committee is looking forward to how they're going to utilize EY to do the independent assessment going forward, and that was what I was referencing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Well, maybe the minister can clarify: Who's finalizing the report? Is it EY, who's been contracted and paid large amounts of money to do the report, or is it the Oversight Committee in government that's finalizing the report?

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

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

Last year, we contracted EY to look at the Muskrat Falls Project, the schedule and the costs and the risk associated with that project. We had a report from them in April. They gave a number of recommendations, Mr. Speaker.

What we said at the time was we were going to look at all those recommendations, implement those recommendations. One thing that was outstanding was the Astaldi contract and reviewing and improving upon such – that was done in December.

The Oversight Committee is now working with EY to finalize the interim report that was put forward in April, and then the second phase of that was to look forward to how EY can be involved in the independent assessment going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Well, it sounds like they're trying to create their implementation plan before EY actually finalizes the report so they all work together, and that's a bit of a concern. But the minister can clarify that, I'm sure, at some point.

What I'd like to ask the minister now, the government has not released a single Muskrat Falls Oversight Committee report since December 2015. Yesterday when asked here in the House about the oversight reports, the minister couldn't answer, so I'll give her another chance today – actually, I'd like to ask the Premier.

When will the government release the Muskrat Falls oversight reports that have not been released since December 2015?

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

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

I'll remind the hon. Member, yesterday I did say that we have an Oversight Committee, we have been working diligently, Mr. Speaker, over the last year to put Muskrat Falls on track. It was in quite a state when we took over government.

We have now added some independence to the Oversight Committee, expanded the Oversight Committee, brought in some incredibly important people to sit on that Oversight Committee, bringing in different perspectives, different skill sets.



The Oversight Committee has met, Mr. Speaker. It meets continuously. We have a new chair of that Oversight Committee who, I'm sure, is working on the reports. They are reviewing, I know, the first quarter reports from the Muskrat Falls Project, and I am sure they are preparing a report for public consumption.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The minister is right; they met continuously. In 2016, there have been at least 11 meetings of the Muskrat Falls Oversight Committee, and some of them were chaired by the former clerk who recently left government.

These Oversight Committee reports are important to the people of the province. The government opposite likes to talk about openness and transparency. So I ask the Premier: When will he direct his minister to release these very important Oversight Committee reports?

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

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

We talk often with the minister and she's answered the questions, many of which have been asked by the Leader of the PC Party, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to see that the Leader of the PC Party is finally asking questions about a very important project. They may have had a lot of meetings – I understand they had a lot of meetings and they talked a lot to themselves, but they didn't produce any outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, the work of this minister, the work of this government, is producing outcomes for the people of Newfoundland as a result of the Muskrat Falls Project. We are putting in place rate mitigation that will keep electricity rates down. They weren't concerned about that. They weren't concerned about pricing of the Muskrat Falls Project, Mr. Speaker. They weren't concerned where it would lead to with low-

income families, the business community in this province and seeing the doubling of electricity rates.

This government has taken action, producing outcomes for Nalcor and the Muskrat Falls Project, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the work of this minister.

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

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

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

We know the Premier or government likes to change the channel; they have done so again today. The question was very simple. We've asked questions on Muskrat Falls for over a year, Mr. Speaker. Over a year we've been here in the House of Assembly asking questions about Muskrat Falls, but we don't get any answers. That's the problem; we don't any answers from government opposite. They talk about and boast about openness and transparency and how grand and wonderful they are. That's what they do.

Why won't they release the Oversight Committee reports? This is a very simple question. Premier, will you direct your minister to release the Oversight Committee reports?

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, allow me to tell the Member opposite that he didn't ask as many questions – he should have asked a whole bunch of questions about Muskrat Falls previously, I can tell you that much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. COADY:** We worked very diligently to put that project on track. The Oversight Committee is an important tool for this government and for the people of the province. There is more information, a significant amount of information on the Nalcor website with regard to Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker. There's plenty of information in the independent engineers' reports; there's more information on the Nalcor

website. Yes, the Oversight Committee will be publishing reports and they are working on that now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

So the minister confirms they won't release the reports from the numerous meetings that happened repeatedly, according to the minister, since 2015. They won't release the EY report, the finalized EY report, until governments get a chance to finalize it.

Mr. Speaker, last night on CBC, Facebook Live, the Premier discussed his intentions to make changes to the conflict of interest legislation. He's also stood by Mr. Coffey in his decision of appointing him and insists and tells the people there was no conflict of interest.

I ask the Premier: If he's now changing the legislation, are you admitting that there was a conflict of interest?

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

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

For those that tuned in to Facebook Live last night and saw that question, what I said to the answer was that if Mr. Coffey was in any instance or any possibility of a conflict of interest, I felt and believed that he would actually come forward and he would state the conflict of interest, Mr. Speaker.

We've outlined, we've asked many questions regarding conflict of interest in this House for a number of days now. What we were referring to last night is a conversation that I've had with the Minister of Justice and Public Safety around legislation that's 25 years old. Interestingly enough, the former premier and Leader of the PC Party stands up here today, talks about conflict of interest, sat on that piece of legislation for over 12 years, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, maybe the Premier is now realizing there was a conflict of interest with his clerk who should never have been appointed in the first place.

I'll ask the Premier: Does your new law and new legislation you're going to bring forward prevent this from happening again?

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

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

Certainly, I'm happy to stand up here and talk about legislative reform, something that was unfortunately not done very much of when the other crowd was here. They reformed things like Bill 29, but couldn't find time to update legislation like conflict of interest which has been in place, I think, since around 1995.

This is just one of the pieces of legislation that we, as a government, will hopefully have a look at, review and do better things with it so that we can help the people of this province. I hope there's another question on conflict of interest because I look forward to continuing to have that chat.

Thank you.

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

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

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

We have lots more questions; they haven't answered the last one yet.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: If he never got caught allowing the Liberal-appointed clerk to be in an obvious conflict of interest and if he didn't resign, would he still be the clerk today?

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

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

We're happy to stand up and talk about a conflict of interest. Again, the Members opposite have asked numerous questions and we've stood and answered them. The fact is that the clerk is no longer here.

We're very happy to look at conflict of interest legislation. I hope the Members opposite will have some input and provide their thoughts on it. Because I certainly know that while they had their time in government, they may have had some issues that popped up that maybe they want to tell us about so that we avoid those situations in the future.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Again, the Member doesn't answer the question.

I'll ask the Premier this. The Premier has talked about transition periods and allowing public service employees to have a transition period in order to eliminate the conflicts of interest that exist.

I'll ask the Premier: Do you stand by that? Is your plan to change the legislation to allow more of this to happen in the future?

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

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

Again, we're looking forward to, amongst many things as it relates to legislative reform, talking about the *Conflict of Interest Act*. One of the things that we want to look at is when the previous government allowed deputy ministers to resign their position to run election campaigns and then come right back into their job, with absolutely no cooling off period or no transition time.

We know that there was no transition period needed for that crowd, but that's something that we're happily going to look at as we reform of conflict of interest legislation; something they couldn't do in their 12 years in government.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Finance tabled information related to *Budget 2016* regarding the public service, which indicated that job reductions were not complete.

I ask the minister: Based on this information, can you confirm that there are an additional 200 more jobs to remove from the 2016 projections?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, for the Member opposite, the information that was tabled for him last week was related to fiscal '16-'17. I'm not familiar with the item that he's talking about, but I'll certainly follow up with officials in the department and provide him the information as quickly as possible.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, the information was information that she tabled which clearly indicated 2016-2017 budget positions related to the 650 FTEs and how they equated to job positions. Based on that, there are 200 more jobs that need to come out if she's going to hit her target. That's the question.

Further to that information, there's indication that 22 more positions will be removed in child and youth protection.

I'll ask the minister: Do you expect this to impact service delivery and the protection of children and youth in our province?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in the earlier answer, the information I provided to the Member last week was related to position eliminations as part of fiscal '16-'17. I'm not familiar with the details around the department that he's asked about, but I'll certainly provide that information to him as quickly as officials can brief me.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, that's why we asked for the information so we could have a discussion here for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador on the numbers. She provided them and she's telling me now she can't comment on the numbers.

So I'll ask her: Based on *Budget 2016* projections and the reductions in positions, are there any reductions that you haven't completed as a result of *Budget 2016*? According to the information you provided us, there is. You certainly should know the answer to that question.

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Member opposite expects that the answers provided by Members of this side of the House are transparent. I want to ensure that he has the most accurate information.

The decisions that were made in Budget 2016-2017 last year was the information that I provided him with. My focus, currently, has been through the process of Estimates related to '17-'18. I will certainly work with officials, refresh the information and provide him the answer to the question.

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, last night on CBC Facebook Live interview, the Premier stated that the direction on the cancelation of the new Mobile high school was given by the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. The Minister of Education here in the House, in response to a question on April 4, said it was done by the department.

Premier, who's correct? Who cancelled the school for the district?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said numerous times here in the House of Assembly over the course of more than a year now, the process for new infrastructure asks for school districts is thus: They make recommendations to the department. The department takes those recommendations and takes them to the Department of Transportation and Works. Ministers on the infrastructure committee then adjudicate those requests. Those requests go to Treasury Board. Ministers on Treasury Board consider the requests. In the end, Cabinet approves all of the infrastructure projects for a given year.

The school district makes recommendations; government makes the final decision. I cannot be any more clearer than that.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Well, I give the minister credit, he repeated what he said on April 4, but that's a total contradiction of what the minister said last night.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** The Premier said that.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Or the Premier said last night. The Premier said the board made the decision. While the minister stated on April 4 that the school district does not make decisions on our new school construction, they make recommendations to the department. Who then, along with TW, as he just said, and Cabinet make the decision on what projects get done.

I ask the Premier: Do you stand by your statement last night that you blamed the English School District for making the decision to cancel Mobile school? In fact, the English School District has never wavered from the decision it made in 2015 to build a new school in that area for the children of that region.

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

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

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

The minister just answered the comment. As I was speaking to and addressing a question that came on Facebook Live last night, I think the minister did a better job in outlining the process than I did last night; I acknowledge that. But I also will acknowledge in the question that came to me last night was in the dying days of the PC government they made a decision to replace, or said they were going to replace a piece of infrastructure that they had 12 years to do and didn't do.

So, Mr. Speaker, the minister just outlined the process. He did a better job than I did last night; had more access to more information. He just answered that question. I will say, as the Member who represents that district, why is it, in his authority as a Cabinet minister, wasn't he able to convince his Cabinet at the time to actually replace that school – why is it that he's placing the blame on this government when he couldn't do it for 12 years?

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Well, I'll tell the Premier, since 2014 from K-12, we spent \$400 million on school infrastructure all over this province.

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** It wasn't only in PC Cabinet ministers' districts. It was districts like Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair we built three new schools because we know everybody in the province deserves a right to good education and access, and that takes time.

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** So, Mr. Speaker, the chair of the English School District wrote the minister on March 22, restating their position that a new school should be approved. That's from the English School District. This is in direct contradiction again to what the Premier said last night. So the board has contradicted the Premier. The minister has contradicted the Premier.

So, Premier, please tell people of district, my area, tell them why you cancelled the school and you're contradicting what the Eastern School District said. Could you please give us the real story on what's going on for the kids in that region?

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, the Member is in a competition with the Education critic over there to see how many times he can ask the same question and get a different response.

I have said time and again, the extension, the nine-classroom extension that will be built to Mobile Central High is the most practical, timely, cost-efficient solution to the capacity issue in that family of schools. Unfortunately, when Mobile Central High was built by the previous administration, their practice of building schools that were too small for the population projections held true; the same as it did for other schools that they built on the

Northeast Avalon that very quickly became too small for growing populations.

We have looked at all the population projections; this solution is the most timely, cost-effective and practical one.

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Thank you.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the English School District, along with the Department of Education, surveyed the region just a little ago and 99 per cent of the region and the families said that wasn't the solution to what was required. The parent committee met with the minister and said, look, we're willing to work you and postpone it to reach the budget; we need to get this done. The parent committee weren't satisfied with that. They asked to meet with the Premier. That was in early April. To date, they've had no answer.

I ask the Premier: Will you meet with the families of those regions and explain to them why it is that you cancelled that new school that's needed for the region and has been determined that is required?

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

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

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

There's been a lot of information that's been shared by the Member opposite today. He would have quite a bit of experience as he deals with the people in his district. I've read the letters and we've answered some questions. The minister has been involved in this as well.

What is missing, I think, from the debate today – as he just mentioned to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, indeed, the people in his own district, as he talked and outlined about the hundreds of millions of dollars that's

been spent on school infrastructure – why was it that it was a minister at the time, an MHA, who should have been, could have been interested in the replacement of that school. Why was it he could make a compelling argument for those almost \$400 million that he just mentioned – couldn't make a compelling argument for his own district.

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

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

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

Can the minister confirm that on May 5, five positions were eliminated at the Marine Institute's Offshore Safety and Survival Centre?

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

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, the Marine Institute and Memorial University have not yet reached out to me but I do understand, based on media reports, that there have been some reductions in staffing complements within the offshore safety centre. It has been made clear through the media reports that there have been some downturns in some industrial training.

I am reaching out to the Marine Institute proactively to encourage them to consider working with their industrial clients to look at the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Job Grant as a means to be able to continue excellent training that the centre does, to provide support to their clients and to continue on with this excellent activity within our offshore sector.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, we've been told that the centre has been running at above capacity with courses being cancelled as recently as two weeks ago due to insufficient staff to deliver training. Yet, last week five positions were eliminated with many future offshore course offerings being cancelled.

I ask the minister: Why does he think this is acceptable?

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

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member offers a very sharp criticism of Memorial University of Newfoundland because, of course, they are the ones that took decisions about staffing. They are the ones that are responsible for their decisions and it is their decisions.

The indication that has come forward to date is that there was a downturn in certain industrial contract training opportunities at the offshore Survival Centre. That seems to be consistent with what we know in the industry generally. However, what we also know is that the Marine Institute is actively trying to expand their book of business, that the work of the Minister of Natural Resources, the preoccupation that our minister has to encourage and continue development is very much a part of ensuring that the Marine Institute is viable and continues to provide this excellent training opportunity that it does. We will continue to work with the Marine Institute to ensure that happens.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Staff have been told that many more layoffs are coming, no jobs are safe.

How many more jobs will be cut? Is the minister aware of any other cuts to come to that program?

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

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, this hon. Member, about a year ago, went on the public airwaves and said that he heard there was campus closures coming right across the board at the College of the North Atlantic, that staff reductions were imminent, that their campus closures were imminent and that there would be chaos at the College of the North Atlantic.

Do you know something, I challenged the hon. Member at that point in time to make clear what

exactly the changes would be, where he heard that information, to clarify it and stand by it. Do you know something? He was nowhere to be seen after he threw that mud out. He was nowhere to be seen because it just simply wasn't true and there is absolutely no indication that's been given to me, or to anyone on this side of the House, that anything that he just said stands in fact.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that by me getting out in front of it last year it frightened the minister into not making those cuts, but we now know –

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Let's go forward a year, we now know that there are 55 positions already gone and we know there are many more to come. So at the end of the day, I think the minister is going to have to stand and defend exactly what his plan is when it comes to CNA.

Mr. Speaker, the other education institute for which the minister is responsible for is CNA. True to form, the minister is keeping his plan secret and every day brings with it more cuts. The Liberal MHA for Bonavista claims he's addressing changes at CNA college in Bonavista.

I ask the minister: Are the rules the same for all campuses or are you playing favourites for your friends?

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

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

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, if that hon. Member, or any Member of that particular caucus, had have stood out in front of anything while serious issues were occurring at the College of the North Atlantic, do you know what they would have done? They would have stopped the spending of over \$10 million annually that nearly put the College of the North

Atlantic into bankruptcy. They were spending their cash reserves and was actually putting the college in a situation where it was becoming insolvent.

If that hon. Member had have taken his responsibilities as a Member of the government, he would never had let the College of the North Atlantic spend \$1.2 million on a marketing campaign which never saw the light of the day. He would have never allowed the College of the North Atlantic to spend thousands and thousands of dollars on fleets of vehicles that were not necessary. He would never have allowed the College of the North Atlantic to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on information technology systems that didn't work.

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

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** Mr. Speaker, today a former senior engineer at Nalcor called for a forensic audit into the initial cost projections that led to sanctioning of the Muskrat Falls Project.

I ask the Premier: Will he order such a forensic audit?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this important question.

We've spent the majority of our time, as a priority, getting the Muskrat Falls Project on track. We have a world-renowned CEO, a stellar and expanded board of directors, an independent Oversight Committee.

Mr. Speaker, that's where our focus has been; our focus has been on making sure that we ensure that the Muskrat Falls Project was well managed.

Mr. Speaker, regarding the question she asked, we're not against reviewing the mistakes of the former administration; that is for darn sure. The Auditor General is in there now. We'll be expecting his report and we'll make decisions from there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

An audit by the Auditor General is not going to do what a forensic audit would do. I'm surprised the Premier doesn't want to get to the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Service NL was presented yesterday with a petition signed by more than 1,000 Labradorians calling for an independent expert review of the North Spur.

I ask the Premier: Will he establish an independent review and provide the findings to the people of Labrador?

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

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

There have been a number of geotechnical experts who have looked at the stabilization of the North Spur. This is going back, I think, to 1965, I believe was the first review of this, for the Muskrat Falls Project. The SNC-Lavalin, which is a global engineering firm, did the immediate design for the stabilization. That stabilization has occurred of the North Spur. Hatch has reviewed that, another global engineering firm with geotechnical expertise. The independent engineer has reviewed that work and continues to monitor and make sure that is reviewed.

We know that the Canadian Dam safety regulations are there. They have to be followed. We know that Hatch has also done a review of dam safety and has assured us that all is in control.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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



**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, government committed, following a meeting with Aboriginal leaders last fall, to instruct Nalcor to release water from the Muskrat Falls reservoir to allow additional methylmercury mitigation measures.

I ask the Premier: Can he give the people who live downstream from Muskrat Falls a timeline on when this promise will be kept?

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

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

As I've mentioned several times in the House, government, myself and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment have been working very closely with indigenous leadership of Labrador to establish the independent experts advisory committee.

That group of experts will deliberate as to the sophistication of this very complicated question. They will be providing recommendations to government as per mitigation measures that may be required around human health and methylmercury, and I look forward to the progress of that institution.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, the leaders were also asking for a timeline.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland Hydro is before the PUB asking for an 18 per cent increase in power rates. I ask the Premier: If Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro cannot mitigate rates now, how can Muskrat Falls' power possibly be made affordable?

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

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

It's a great opportunity to actually answer the question about rate mitigation and what their plans will be in the future.

Mr. Speaker, this government realizes, as most people around the province would know, that doubling of electricity rates is not something that we can actually tolerate – the impact that it would have on families, the impact that it would have the business community, the economy in a general way. What we put in place in budget 2017-2018 based on our forecast is the money that we would use.

It starts out to be \$210 million, \$245 million – we know there will be even more work to be done but we're going to continue. We want to signal early, as I said to the province last night. Putting the signals out early that we've got this under control; we will not allow rates to double, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the Muskrat Falls Project. We will not allow that to happen and we're putting measures in place.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

**Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees**

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

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

The Government Services Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report they have passed without amendment the Estimates of: the Department of Transportation and Works, the Department of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, the Department of Finance, Consolidated Funds Services, the Government Purchasing Agency, the Public Service Commission, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, the Human Resource Secretariat and the Women's Policy Division of the Executive Council.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Government Services Committee Members: the hon. Member for Stephenville – Port au Port, the Member for Burin – Grand Bank, the Member for Ferryland, the Member for Mount Pearl North, the Member for Bonavista, the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi and the Member for Harbour Main.

I'd also like to thank the Member for St. George's – Humber and the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels for filling in, as well as the Member for Conception Bay26 South and the Member for Cape St. Francis.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank the Ministers of Transportation and Works, Finance and Service NL and their staff for their hard work leading up to the Estimates. I'd also like to thank the Table Clerks and the Pages, as well as the Broadcast Centre, for their professional services and a job well done.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further presenting reports by standing and select committees?

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Question for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

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

WHEREAS we insist that the well-being and safety of our families take priority over any economic consideration; and

WHEREAS we reject, in advance, any Nalcor-led plan to send its experts to Labrador to inform; and

WHEREAS we are calling for a process where independent experts are provided with everything they need to ascertain the safety of the North Spur, that is: the proper mandate, documents, financing and time; and

WHEREAS we demand this process have a public component where we, the people, can have access and can ask questions; and

WHEREAS the Premier promised to open the books on Muskrat Falls and, so far, that has not happened;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to consider the establishment of an independent expert review of the North Spur.

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

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

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

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

I think it's really important for us to listen here in this House today to this petition that comes from people who live in Labrador, who live in the area that will be so affected by Muskrat Falls and who, if there ever were a fault in Muskrat Falls and a disaster happened, would be directly the people who are affected.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, the people in Labrador are feeling isolated. They're feeling ignored. They're feeling that nobody is hearing their voice. I know that government keeps putting out all the things they think that has been going on. But when it comes down to it, there really is a lot of information that isn't out there, a lot of information that isn't public and reviews that have been done by people that people in Labrador and others question, are they really external to the project.

What the people in Labrador are asking for, I think, and I'm happy to support it, is a very reasonable request. The government keeps ignoring the fact that there is more than one opinion out there with regard to the North Spur. Just as they put forward and say there are experts who say everything is fine, there are experts out there who are saying they are in dreadful fear of what can happen with that North Spur.

I've spoken to engineers myself, engineers who have experience in this area, who are extremely concerned and who cannot understand how government ignores this call for the North Spur to be completely reviewed by an independent expert group, as is being suggested by the petitioners.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the Adult Dental Program coverage for clients of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program under the Access and 65Plus Plan were eliminated in *Budget 2016*; and

WHEREAS many low-income individuals and families can no longer access basic dental care; and

WHEREAS those same individuals can now no longer access dentures;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the Adult Dental Program to cover low-income individuals and families to better ensure oral health, quality of life and dignity.

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

This petition is dated last month, April 2017. The cuts that were made in 2016 continue into 2017. In fact, the impact may even be bigger. The Adult Dental Program, when the PCs took office in 2003, didn't exist. There was no Adult Dental Program. The program was put in place to recognize how important oral health is in terms of people's overall health. We also had to recognize through the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program that there were challenges affecting particularly low-income individuals, families and also seniors, so plans were put in place for that very reason.

To see the Adult Dental Program basically wiped out last year was more than concerning. It's actually frightening for many of the families that are now struggling to meet these needs and we're all hearing from them. I suspect that Members on both sides of the House are hearing from people that have been impacted by these cuts.

We are calling on government, joining with these petitioners in calling on government, to revisit that decision to eliminate the Adult Dental Program and to make sure that people do have access to oral health services so that they can enjoy a better quality of life and live with dignity as well.

Cuts to the Prescription Drug Program and the Adult Dental Program have impacted many, many people, many, many families, many, many seniors in this province and we have a responsibility to bring those concerns to the House of Assembly.

There is a better way. This program was working. Over the past decade or so it had a phenomenal impact on the lives of many people in our province and we believe that these changes need to be revisited. Oral health is a vital component of somebody's overall health. That's well understood and well recognized and we need for this government to recognize that as well.

Thank you.

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

Orders of the DayPrivate Members' Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Seeing no further petitions I call on the Member for St. George's – Humber to present his private Member's resolution.

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

It's great to rise today to present this private Member's resolution in the House on protected areas. I'll read the motion into the record of the House for the purposes of Members present and also people who may be watching:

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has a spectacular range of biodiversity in need of protection; and

WHEREAS just 4.6 per cent of our provincial land mass is currently protected, which is just half of the overall Canadian average; and

WHEREAS a well-governed, scientifically based system for designating protected areas has the potential to benefit the environment, our economy and our research endeavours;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador designating more protected areas in our province.

The motion is direct. It asks us to support the designation of more protected areas in the province. It's to the point I guess in that it asks that we express an opinion about the designation of more protected areas in this province. That's what the resolution is about.

Private Members' resolutions in general, I should say, are non-binding on government. They're really an opportunity for a private Member to present an issue before the House that they think is important to their district or to the overall province in general.

That's this resolution. It's an opportunity for us to have a debate on an important issue that is often lost in the back and forth of partisan politics that is important nonetheless, Mr. Speaker. It's very important that we have this

debate today and I'm very much looking forward to it.

Before I begin I just want to give a definition of what is a protected area, just a general definition. A protected area is a clearly defined geographic space recognized, dedicated and managed through legal or other effective means to achieve the long-term conservation of nature within the associated ecosystems, services and cultural values. That's a definition of what a protected area is and what we'll be debating today.

As I said, the basic question that we're debating today – and I hope we can have sort of a non-partisan debate today because this is sort of an issue that I'm hoping we can all agree on and that we can all move forward. I think by speaking with one voice here in this House today we can send a message to the people of the province that we think protected areas are important. We can send a message to the government – and in government I mean Cabinet – that protected areas are important as well and we would like to see government move forward with this. I'm looking forward to this debate today.

Just a little background about wilderness and ecological reserves in this province, some of the history of the establishment of these protected areas in the province: The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador passed the *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act* in 1980. The purpose of the act was to design a guide for the creation of a system of protected areas in the province. These protected areas would preserve wilderness, representative of unique ecosystems, species or natural phenomenon.

This act of 1980, when it was passed it was seen as we were sort of leading the country. It was seen as very strong legislation. It was put forward and passed by government in 1980. One of the things they did in that act was they established an 11-member committee called the Wilderness and Ecological Reserve Advisory Council. The purpose of this committee was to advise government on the creation and management of wilderness and ecological reserves. That's one of the provisions of this act.

This group is an independent group made up of citizens. They make recommendations to government in relation to ecological and wilderness reserves, but government makes the final decision in terms of the establishment of a reserve.

Also, there's an opportunity for individuals or groups, non-government organizations, to have input as well. They can propose protected areas by completing a Study Area Nomination Form. It's possible for a member of the public to suggest to the government that a certain area be made an ecological reserve or a wilderness reserve. So there's opportunity for that level of input as well. Since that act was passed in 1980, we've established a number of reserves and we've created a number of protected areas.

The next step in creating more protected areas would be the public release and review of the Natural Areas System Plan and then working cooperatively with communities, industry and other members of the public to create a viable protected area system. So that's the sort of process that is outlined in the act that was passed in 1980.

Mr. Speaker, I guess the question we have to ask is: Where are we now? Where are we now in comparison to other jurisdictions in Canada and in the world? If you look at the percentage of the total land mass that's dedicated in each province and other jurisdictions to wilderness reserves or ecological reserves, we find that Newfoundland is not doing so well and successive government have not sort of kept up with other jurisdictions in terms of identifying protected areas and designating protected areas.

Only 4.6 per cent of our province is under protection from provincially assigned protected areas. There are other areas in terms of national parks and those sorts of things that drive up that percentage. This is about maybe half of the Canadian average. So we're not really doing that well in terms of the amount of area, percentage of our province that is designated towards protected areas.

Conservation experts generally agree that a healthy conservation target is between 12 and 15 per cent. The trend towards creating protected areas that are designed in a network that reflects

how different species move across the landscape, those are some things that the conservation experts suggest as well.

In terms of how we compare to other jurisdictions; in 1992, 150 governments signed a convention related to promoting sustainable development, and the protected areas are viewed worldwide as a fundamental insurance policy for the future. The protocols that were agreed to in 2010 called for a target of 17 per cent of the total land be allocated as protected areas. Again, Newfoundland is very low in comparison to that.

In 2016, the federal government moved towards outlining how jurisdictions can contribute to conserving at 17 per cent of the Canadian terrestrial land and inland water areas by 2020. These are some targets that are being outlined in terms of how we compare to what people say we should have, how we compare to other jurisdictions. If you look at our percentage in relation to the rest of Canada, we're near the bottom of the grouping of provinces in terms of how much area we have protected. So that's where we are now.

Before my time for introduction is up, I want to talk about some of the benefits of protected areas. The obvious one is the conservation of biological diversity. We have a number of reserves and ecological reserves that do that in this province, in terms of rare plants and rare animals that are protected through ecological reserves.

Another interesting reason why protected areas are important is because as public opinion changes in relation to the environment and where environment becomes more important for people and the way they buy products and the way they do business, ecological reserves have an economic benefit as well for a province because the idea of social marketing licence becomes important.

For example, you notice a lot of paper that you get notes that the books and documents were printed on ecologically friendly paper. People, individuals now are making decisions about how they buy food and how they buy other types of products, based on the way they have been produced. Have they been produced in a humane

and ecologically friendly manner? That's becoming a more important issue as well.

Another thing is the economic benefits. In the past, we've often gotten into a sort of argument or competition between economic benefits and environmental benefits, but what we're finding is more and more, rather than seeing a competition between these users, we're seeing people think in a way of how does one complement the other. How does being environmentally friendly, being environmentally cautious benefit the economy of various areas?

The whole idea of environmental stewardship being very important to the economic development of the province is important as well. If you look at the way protected areas can help the environment, one way is if you have protected areas or you have certain areas that are protected as protected areas, then businesses are sure of where they can – in what parameters they operate under. So it's important to have that sureness of where things can be developed and where they can't. It gives businesses a clear picture of where development can occur and where it can't.

Other benefits from protected areas are scientific research, ecotourism, recreation. These protected areas, in many cases, allow for certain activities such as boating and outfitting, hiking and camping, hunting and trapping, angling, snowmobiling and boating to continue to occur in some of these areas. Things they wouldn't allow is the destruction of plants and wildlife, and there would be some restrictions in terms of forestry, mining, hydro and other development as well.

Those are some of the benefits, and I look forward to what other people have to say. I hope we can all speak with one voice on this issue. It's a very clear motion and I'm looking forward to what other people have to say.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Good afternoon once again. I'm happy to have a chance to rise and speak to this private Member's motion today.

Just because it's going to impact some of the remarks I make in the next few minutes, I just want to restate the resolution to make sure we appreciate what we are specifically addressing. It's not long, so I'll read it in the next 25 seconds:

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has a spectacular range of biodiversity in need of protection; and

WHEREAS just 4.6 per cent of our provincial land mass is currently protected, which is just half of the overall Canadian average; and

WHEREAS a well-governed, scientifically-based system for designating protected areas has the potential to benefit our environment, our economy and our research endeavours;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED – the important part – that this hon. House supports the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador designating more protected areas in our province.

That's a concept that I support. I think it has to be done carefully; I think it has to be done responsibly. It's very easy to rise today and say, yeah, that in principle is a good idea which is effectively what we're saying, but the devil is often in the details. It just has to be done very, very carefully.

The first WHEREAS clause here is actually very straightforward; our province does indeed have a spectacular range of biodiversity that is in need of protection. Much of it has been protected. Our province is amazing in terms of its natural beauty and its richness. Nobody in his Legislature, I'm sure, would disagree with that. It's important that we protect what we have. So that's also absolutely true.

I guess the real question as you move forward in this area or move further in this area I should say, is what level of protection do certain areas need and how do we achieve it? I believe the key to success when we're talking about this resolution today to designate more protected

areas in our province; I think the key to success is striking a sensible balance. I hope that as government moves forward, and I suspect they have plans to move forward if we're debating this private Member's motion today. I hope government will strike a sensible balance. Our responsibility as an Opposition is to ask good questions and hold government accountable for doing just that.

Some areas that are already protected, like national parks and wilderness and ecological reserves, they're protected because of the nature of those areas, whether it's through a federal designation or through a provincial designation. The protection they receive is absolutely significant, but even if an area is set aside for resource development, there are certain measures we put in place through the *Environmental Assessment Act* and other legislation to ensure that the harmful impacts are minimized and sites are remediated after they are used.

There are degrees of protection. Within a municipality laws ensure protection of a natural environment from unreasonable harm. Along a public highway, other laws govern how we treat them. In exceptionally sensitive areas where species are vulnerable, we ratchet up our protections to another level and sometimes take extraordinary measures to keep a vulnerable species from being lost. Again, it's all about striking the right balance in whatever particular situation we're talking about, so that we minimize harm while we engage in the activities that sustain our economy.

That brings us to the second WHEREAS clause. Just 4.6 per cent of our province's land mass is currently protected, which is just half the overall Canadian average. That's actually the part of this resolution that I have a problem with. Again, I'm supportive of the motion overall. I think we have to proceed extremely carefully, but I'm not so sure about this WHEREAS clause around the 4.6 per cent and I'd like to take a few minutes to explain why.

The federal Department of Environment and Climate Change Canada published a report in 2015 entitled, *Canadian Protected Areas Status Report*, and it covered 2012 to 2015. Here's what the report said, and I'm quoting: "In

Newfoundland and Labrador, at the end of 2015, terrestrial protected areas covered 29 420 km<sup>2</sup> or 7.3% of the province." Protected areas cover 7.3 per cent of the province.

I'm still quoting: "Nearly one quarter of this area (6 630 km<sup>2</sup>) was protected by the province" – and that's in Table 29 of this report that I'm referring to. "The remainder was made up of federal protected areas" – which is Table 30 in that report. "Marine protected areas covered 233 km<sup>2</sup>. The province of Newfoundland and Labrador administered 156 km<sup>2</sup> and the remainder was administered by the federal government."

Ottawa says 7.3 per cent, not 4.6 per cent. So perhaps it's a question of what areas are being considered, perhaps it's a question of definition. I respectfully draw Members' attention to that because I actually believe we're doing somewhat better than what this motion implies today and, in fact, we're much closer to the Canadian average than what this motion implies today.

Ottawa's report covered the last four years under our administration and it certainly wasn't a scathing report. I think that Members opposite would acknowledge that as well. It also listed some significant accomplishments that took place in that period from 2012 to 2015, recent progress that's been made when it comes to protecting environmentally sensitive areas in our provinces. I think some of that is worth nothing.

"A new national park reserve was established in collaboration with Parks Canada in the Mealy Mountains area of Labrador in 2015. The park reserve protects roughly 10 700 km<sup>2</sup>, which is the largest national park in eastern Canada. Establishment was a multi-year joint effort undertaken by Parks Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to refine, define and mark the boundary and develop an approach for addressing existing uses by Indigenous groups and local Labrador residents."

That's not all: "Two ecological reserves were established under the *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act*: Sandy Cove Ecological Reserve in 2013 and Lawn Bay Ecological Reserve" – which is a seabird reserve. That was established

in 2015. “Sandy Cove Ecological Reserve protects an endangered plant species, Long’s Braya (*Braya longii*) ...” – I’m probably pronouncing it wrong.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No.

**MR. KENT:** No? Okay, thank you.

“... endemic to the limestone barrens on the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. The Reserve is globally significant because it contains 95% of the world’s population of Long’s Braya occurring on undisturbed habitat. Lawn Bay Ecological Reserve, off the Burin Peninsula along the southern coast of Newfoundland, contains the only known breeding colony of Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) in North America. The islands in the Reserve also support a significant population of Leach’s Storm-Petrel (*Oceandroma leucorhoa*) and smaller numbers of other breeding seabirds.” So those protected areas are indeed significant and recently became protected areas.

“Through a partnership with a local community group from Portugal Cove South,” in the great District of Ferryland “on the Avalon Peninsula ... the provincial Department of Environment and Conservation submitted a nomination to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Committee to inscribe Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve as a World Heritage Site.”

I know the Member for Ferryland is quite passionate about that. He’s spoken in this House recently about that very issue. “The process of developing the nomination created a strong management framework for the property with a jointly developed management plan, new management structure, long-term monitoring protocols and strong community support.”

In relation to Mistaken Point, we believe there’s an incredible potential and an incredible opportunity to follow through with what was envisioned for that site.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Unfortunately, we’re not sure that people on the other side get that same (inaudible).

**MR. KENT:** The Member took the words right out of my mouth, even though, I guess, I have the floor at the moment.

We’re not sure government fully appreciates that and is doing enough to protect Mistaken Point and to move it forward. I digress; I’m sure the Member for Ferryland will speak at length about that in the future in the House as he’s already done.

The top five priorities for protected areas planning and management by Newfoundland and Labrador over the next three to five years, and this was outlined again in this federal report, 2012 to 2015: Identifying priority areas for protection – which is part of what we’re talking about today; establishing new protected areas – that’s been on the radar for some time, and as I just outlined, there’s been some really good progress made in recent years; meeting protected areas targets; enhancing management in existing protected areas; and furthering education and outreach.

So that isn’t bad. This federal report is really saying that there was considerable progress from 2012 to 2015 in Newfoundland and Labrador.

If you go to page 12 of that report, you’ll see a table entitled: summary of terrestrial protected areas in Canada by province and territory, and the table lists the percentage of area of the province or territory protected. Guess what? Again, Newfoundland and Labrador is at 7.3 per cent, higher than PEI’s protection of 3.1 per cent, higher than New Brunswick’s percentage of 4.6 per cent.

Now, that’s not to say we should only look at Atlantic Canada, because given the natural beauty that exists in this province and given the number of environmentally sensitive areas of this province, we should aim higher. Let’s keep in mind, that 7.3 per cent is really not that far from Saskatchewan’s 8½ percent, or Northwest Territories 9.3 per cent, or Nova Scotia’s 9.7 per cent, or Quebec’s 9.8 per cent. There’s actually only one province that has double the protected area of ours and that’s British Columbia with 15.3 per cent. So the others are, relatively speaking, in the same ballpark as we are today.



The report points out that: “The federal government administers or jointly administers over 80% (approximately 43 000 km<sup>2</sup>) of Canada’s marine area protected. This area is managed by three organizations: Parks Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.”

Then, Mr. Speaker, the report goes on to note that: “Every jurisdiction in Canada (the federal government, provinces and territories) has legislative tools that enable the creation of protected areas. These are diverse and include national parks, provincial parks, wildlife areas, conservation areas, heritage rangelands, private nature reserves, Indigenous protected areas, sanctuaries, and marine parks to name but a few. At present count, there are 55 separate Acts that are used, or could be used to establish” protected areas in Canada.

We have five types of protected areas in Newfoundland and Labrador that are governed by four different pieces of legislation. When we talk about continuing to do more which, again, I think is a good thing, that’s what we’re talking about. We’re talking about four different pieces of legislation, five different types of protected areas that exist today in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The report had something else positive to say. It said: “In addition to site-specific protected area establishment processes and protected areas strategies that relate to establishing systems of those sites,” some protected area organizations undertake network planning.

“Individual protected areas can be more effective at conserving biodiversity over the long-term when they are designed and managed as part of a larger network. Out of the 15 organisations, 10 (67%) have a strategy or system plan in place for the development of their network of terrestrial protected area that is based on an established ecological framework (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan and Environment and Climate Change Canada). Each of these reported that their strategy is based on an established ecological framework.”

My point, Mr. Speaker, is that there’s been some good work done. There has been some good groundwork laid. There have been new protected areas created in recent years. That’s not to say we shouldn’t do more.

I support in principle the concept of expanding the number of protected areas in Newfoundland and Labrador, but I think it’s important to put it in perspective and look at where we are relative to the rest of the country. That’s not to say we can’t do more but I think it’s really important to consider where we actually are today. I believe the percentage of land that’s actually protected is much more comparable to the rest of the country than this motion implies.

I’m about to run out of time, but another –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**MR. KENT:** I don’t think I’ll get leave today.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**MR. KENT:** Thank you for that.

The report went on to say: “Some organisations have assessed the extent to which their protected areas network effectively addresses the objective of biodiversity conservation.

“For terrestrial and freshwater protected areas networks, nine out of 15 (60%) of organisations have substantially or partially completed a gap analysis with respect to biological diversity while six out of 15 (40%) report that a gap analysis has not been conducted.”

“Newfoundland and Labrador used the results of its gap analysis to identify sites with high biodiversity or significant natural features.” Again, positive news.

The report goes on to provide several other examples of where Newfoundland and Labrador, when it comes to environmental leadership in the last number of years, has done a pretty good job. So let’s do more. Let’s aim higher.

I thank the Member for bringing in this private Member’s motion today. It’s a good concept. We should look at what other protected areas

that could be considered to become formally protected areas, but let's strike the right balance.

We also have considerable economic opportunities that need to be perused in this province. So let's strike the right balance, not at the expense of our environment, but let's make sure we make responsible decisions about the percentage of land that we're actually designating and we're doing so in the right cases where it makes sense.

We, as a government, were very committed to protecting our natural areas. We made significant progress while continuing to grow the economy, and that's the challenge for any government.

It is a decent private Member's motion today. Let's proceed with caution and let's acknowledge that a lot of good work's been done to get us to where we are at this point in our history.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It is indeed an honour to stand and speak to, in particular, this motion. With my background in the last 30 years working in ecology and Northern ecosystems all over the world, I've had a chance to see so many aspects around the idea of a natural area systems plan, protected areas, where it's worked, where it hasn't worked and so on. I suspect I could probably speak for something like 14 hours, not 14 minutes, but I'm going to do my best to concisely identify a few points.

First of all, just in response to the Member opposite from Mount Pearl North and some of his comments, and just a very clear and important comment. I hope he's listening because he was drawing reference to some confusion, potentially, around the aspect of 4.6 per cent versus 7.2 or 7.3 per cent.

If the Member was paying close attention to my colleague, what he did in fact say is that the 4.6 per cent relates to the amount of provincially protected area in this province. The additional some 2.6 per cent – I'm hoping he's listening – represents that contribution from areas designated under federally protected status. Indeed we are talking apples to apples and it is about 7.2 per cent of protected area. Different jurisdictional responsibilities so that's why the numbers are different.

We have about 405,000 square kilometres in this province. It's a very big piece of land but it's also one that is under challenge. I'm going to try, in my next 13 minutes or so, to speak about a few more concepts. I think I will also correct the Member opposite on one more point and the table that he was reading from when he referred to the Mealy Mountains National Park as being in place. It is actually still not gazetted; it's still not officially in place.

I had the pleasure myself of having signed off when I was Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I guess at the time I was Minister of Environment and Conservation. We are anxiously awaiting the final conclusion of a key signature and I'm anticipating, hopefully, that the federal government will be in Labrador, in this province announcing that very important tract of land. It's a great jewel to the province and, particularly, to the people of Labrador.

I draw a reference to the Member's comment around Mistaken Point. It's a tremendous example of co-operation between, as I've said before, government, the public, especially through the Mistaken Point Ambassadors Inc. and academia as how they've all come together, recognizing the absolute uniqueness. It's actually a habitat with particular features important to the history of the world and how that's come about and its protected status.

So, what I'm going to talk about, it's going to surprise some of you, but I'm going to talk a little bit about, first of all, New Zealand. You're going to say: Why is that guy standing up and speaking about New Zealand? Well, I think if most of us understand the country of New Zealand – I've been lucky enough to have visited there, worked a little bit there. It's about the size of Labrador, actually. It's about 268,000

square kilometres. I think, as we all think about it and we think about those beautiful images. If we've ever seen it, we think about this amazingly natural beauty of New Zealand.

Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, New Zealand has – I'll find my notes here. Only 7 per cent of New Zealand's landscape is authentic, is natural. The rest of it has been completely stripped for sheep farming and/or planted over in what's called radiata pine. It's a fast-growing coniferous tree.

I've talked to many people – and if you've got the ecological background you can kind of see these things. I've heard many people talk about all those beautiful forests, those beautiful pastures and so on. What a wonderful natural area. Mr. Speaker, it's a tortured landscape. It's really a shame.

I did a little calculation, I've identified some 50 species of wildlife that no longer exist, that were endemic to New Zealand that have disappeared in the last couple of hundred years just through the intense development of the landscape and the lack of protected areas. Like so many opportunities and so many situations in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have a chance to learn from the lessons of others if we can get this right.

What I thought I'd talk about now, I think the next important thing is: Why are protected areas so important? You need to understand the concept of what an ecological niche is. What a niche refers to is a particular species and the role that it plays in an environment.

I'm just going to look at the House here just by way of demonstration. If I'm thinking of this as a forest and this is an opening, and maybe I've got some tall, mature trees overhead, I've essentially got two layers of habitat, if you like, or of vegetative cover. I've got a ground layer, which is this carpet and I've got trees up above. I don't have a lot of shrubs in between; I don't have a lot of other plants. It's a very simple kind of ecosystem.

In a simple kind of ecosystem you tend to have very few species that can actually survive in such a situation. Where you find complex and, frankly, very biodiverse systems are things like rainforests where you have amazing layers of

canopy and different plant species. With each of these, in each combination, it provides a different kind of habitat for a different set of species.

Newfoundland and Labrador – just a little correction on some of the terms that we're going to use here this afternoon – is diverse in terms of the landscapes that it has; everything from on the Great Northern Peninsula, the Limestone Barrens, where I live in Labrador some of that boreal forest, to the Torngat Mountains which is really a subarctic. Very different kinds of landscapes but, frankly, each of them is actually quite simplistic.

We don't tend to have a lot of – certainly in a rainforest situation where you'd have a lot of species. However, just because it's a simple system doesn't mean it isn't special and doesn't mean we shouldn't protect it. Again, I just mentioned the Limestone Barrens. These are absolutely unique.

The Member opposite referred to Long's Braya and some of the other interesting plants. These are plants that grow only in association with high levels of calcium. They're called Calcareous forms and really that's the only place you can find them. Some of the species we have in this province are unique to Newfoundland and Labrador. They're not found anywhere else in the world or they're only found – most of the plants that we know are in this area.

So realizing that and realizing the importance of these plants is all part of the strategy that we need to develop in terms of a natural area assistance plan or what we refer to in the business an ecological land classification which is you start out at sort of ecozones, ecoregions, sub-regions and finally, habitats, and it's a way of looking at the landscape.

The strategy for setting up this natural area systems plan is to make sure that we have in this province, and under our protected status, examples of each of these very unique habitats that we have. Frankly, all of us as MHAs, we represent areas that I can assure you are very unique in they don't occur in a widespread way. As an Island, Newfoundland has a lot of features associated with – you don't see in the rest of Canada.

It's a very interesting and important consideration when we go to do this. I think the Members opposite are supporting the motion. They are providing caution because as they advocated, you need to find balance. I must say, I've had a career working around environmental assessment and striking that balance between ensuring the integrity of ecological values, i.e., the habitats, the species that are supported there as well as the importance of economic opportunity, societies needs on the landscape and so on, so striking that balance.

I guess the next point I wanted to make, and I just have a simple question, a simple little phrase I'm going to pose to the Members here and I would suggest there is room. What I mean by that, there is room in this province for the mining industry, the forest industry, agricultural sector, all matter of land use activity and have representative areas of natural, ecologically sound, and very much original forest and forest cover in this province all together.

I find that either as a politician or previously as an ecological scientist, you run into these clashes because often it's around a particular area or a particular situation but it really comes down to entities such as government has in place now. It's called ILUC, this Interdepartmental Land Use Committee. This group is charged with ensuring that the objectives of each of the departments of government are able to meet their objectives and do so in a way that's coordinated and that we can allow such protected areas to be set up.

A couple of points I wanted to make around some of these land uses which are often deemed to be a conflict. I'm going to go to forestry. I am a forester and very much aware of some of the changing societal attitudes towards forestry. In the past, forestry – in my game they used to say the four Ws of forestry: wood, wildlife, water and 'wrecreation'. It was a little jingle that one of my professors had. It was a very simplistic way to look at the forest, but, in fact, society today demands so much more. You use terms like sustainable forest certification.

Canada now has half of its total forest cover tied up in a forest certification process. There are three main certification processes. Why I'm mentioned this is that these systems of

certification mean that if I'm a forestry company and I'm harvesting wood and I'm selling lumber on the national and international markets, that wood needs to be certified as having come from a forest which is managed appropriately, i.e. it's not in a complete clear-cut situation and so on.

Part of that requirement, a very important part of that requirement, is to ensure the land within that area that's being managed by that forest company, that jurisdiction and so on, has areas representing those natural areas set aside for protection. It's recognizing there are other uses besides wood and so on. Realizing that, it's all the more incentive.

As we go to develop our forest industry – and my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, has a very demanding portfolio, as he needs to develop and support what's always been a very important industry for us in the forestry industry. They need to recognize, all of the stakeholders groups, businesses and so on, they will need to have in place those protected areas.

Formally, when I was minister responsible for the environment and I was meeting with entities such as prospectors and others from the mining industry, they were drawing great concern that large chunks of area, chunks of this province, were being tied up and thereby they saw them as being completely isolated.

I do believe there are strategies where we can actually find the two coexisting together. It's all about dialogue. It's all about shared explanation of what each other's objectives are and finding, on a map, a way that we can accommodate everyone. As I said, there is room for all.

What have I forgotten here? I think I want to go back because it is quiet – I do want to sum up that I feel the motion today is a very important one for carrying on our obligation to meet, what the federal government has asked of each of the jurisdictions. While at our 7.2 per cent right now, if we go to it – the Mealy Mountain Park Reserve by the way, that will get us to about 9 per cent, so it's a big jump. That's a huge contribution to it.

There's a lot more to be done. We really should be at that 15 per cent; 17 per cent which is what

the federal government are seeking out now of all the provinces and territories. Moving to set up ecologically representative habitats in our province is definitely a good move.

One other item I wanted to put on the agenda is that I spent three years of my life about five years ago working on what's called the Labrador blueprint or it's a nature atlas. That work was done in association with the Nature Conservancy of Canada. We looked solely at Labrador and all of the ecozones, ecoregions, sub-regions and habitats that are represented in there and actually have developed a very useful GIS tool for identifying where these representative areas are.

Newfoundland could be the next step. It's certainly much more developed and I would say that it's much more challenged. In the interest of time, I wanted to leave folks with an understanding.

As with New Zealand, when you drive along the road and you think that everything is green and natural and good, I don't want to necessarily discount, but I would say that, folks, the way to see this province is to get up in a helicopter. You only have to fly along the Northern Peninsula and see what is unfortunately a very tortured landscape; when you get to the large expanses of wetland on our South Coast and so on, again, an extremely tortured landscape. We need to move now to secure these areas and set them aside for future generations.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I want to thank the Member opposite for bringing this private Member's resolution to the floor of the House today. As my colleague for Mount Pearl North stated, we believe in protected areas, the general concept.

My stance and I believe our stance is: Proceed with caution. It's a good thing to do. There's a lot of value in having certain protected areas

within the province, as we all know, but there's a certain other thing.

We're at a level now percentage-wise as we stated earlier at 7.3, I believe, the federal government has already deemed us to have that in protected areas now. I know that in the resolution it says 4.6 per cent and I know the minister opposite just alluded to the federal government are looking to around 16 to 17 per cent protected areas for all provinces. That's a lofty goal.

I think there are a lot of things you need to proceed with caution. You have possible mining developments, future development, forestry, your agriculture. There are a lot of required uses of our lands that I just think we need to proceed with caution.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to refer back to the previous administration. It was in 2015, the Minister of Environment of the day addressed the Newfoundland and Labrador Protected Areas Forum by raising a number of significant points about the progress we had made as a government during our term.

He talked about "our network of 18 Ecological Reserves; 2 Wilderness Reserves; 13 Provincial Camping Parks; 7 Natural and Scenic Attraction Parks; One Waterway Park; 10 Provincial Park Reserves; the T'Railway Provincial Park and 3 National Parks."

He talked about Sandy Cove Ecological Reserve which "was designated as a provincial ecological reserve in April 2007 and received full ecological reserve status in March of 2013."

Mr. Speaker, he also talked about "the Limestone Barrens Action Committee, the Limestone Barrens Habitat Stewardship Program, and the Limestone Barrens Species at Risk Recovery Team have been engaged in the establishment and stewardship of the reserve over the years."

He talked about "the Lawn Bay Ecological Reserve, which was established as a provincial reserve in 2009, was given full ecological reserve status under the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act as a seabird ecological reserve. The small islands within the Law Bay

Ecological Reserve are home to thousands of nesting birds. The reserve was established primarily to protect the only known colony of Manx shearwater in North America. The Manx shearwater is a nocturnal sea bird that nests and burrows up to four feet deep and has been recorded with a lifespan of over 50 years.

“The islands also provide habitat for at least seven other breeding seabird species, including a significant colony of Leach’s storm-petrels and smaller number of great black-backed gulls, herring gulls, black guillemots,” – these words are tough, Mr. Speaker – “black-legged kittiwakes, common murres and from time to time, arctic and common terns.

“Although small in size, the island and the waters within the Lawn Bay Ecological Reserve are important habitat for thousands of feeding and fledging seabirds. The Reserve includes Middle Lawn Island, Colombier Island and Swale Island.”

Then he talked “about the Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve located in Portugal Cove South. This site has more than 10,000 fossil impressions, ranging from a few centimetres to some two metres in length readily visible for scientific study and supervised public viewing along the coastline.

“Mistaken Point is an incredible place. The preserved fossils found at the site are dated between 580 and 560 million years old making them the oldest-known, large complex life forms found on Earth and a critical milestone in the history of life on earth.

“And not only do we think Mistaken Point is incredible, but it is currently being considered by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.” This was in 2015. We all know that right now today it has been recognized as a World Heritage Site.

“Under the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO’s goal is to ensure the conservation of the world’s natural and cultural heritage and encourage local participation in the preservation of that heritage.

“The World Heritage Committee decides which heritage sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List, reviews the state of conservation

of existing sites, allocates financial assistance through the World Heritage Fund, requests that participating State Parties take action to enhance the protection and management of threatened World Heritage Sites, and reports its findings to the General Conference of UNESCO.

“Our official nomination dossier was forwarded to the World Heritage Centre in Paris, France, in January of this year.” As I just stated, in July of 2016 it became a reality.

He also mentioned that our government was working with WERAC on the finalization of the Natural Areas System Plan. “We are committed to protecting biodiversity and natural heritage of the province through completion of this plan, which will represent a significant contribution to the goal of sustainable development as well as provide for the effective management of a wide variety of truly unique and beautiful landscapes.”

He also talked about the establishment of the Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve. “In 2010, Canada and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador announced that the two governments had agreed to establish a 10,700 square km national park reserve in the Mealy Mountains in Labrador. They also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

“Since then, a negotiating team with representatives from the Province and Parks Canada has been working to finalize a land transfer agreement. This agreement sets out the terms and conditions for the transfer of provincial Crown land to Canada for the purposes of establishing a national park; and the obligations of both parties, specifically highlighting the social and economic benefits that Canada will commit to the Province in return for the transfer of provincial land.”

Mr. Speaker, he also said: “One of the primary issues raised by Labradorians in the feasibility study was that traditional land use activities should be allowed to continue within the national park reserve without a sunset clause. Such traditional land uses include, among others, the continuing use of personal cabins, boil-ups, cutting wood for personal use, gathering medicinal and healing herbs, berry

picking, fishing, and hunting, trapping and snaring small game.

“This approach to traditional land use was supported by the federal and provincial governments and the land transfer agreement will contain a framework and principles guiding the continuation of traditional activities by Labradorians within the national park reserve.”

Finally, he said “adjacent to the Mealy Mountains National Park is the Eagle River watershed. In 2010, government announced its intent to establish a waterway provincial park in this watershed. The proposed provincial park is located in central Labrador and will encompass almost the entire length of the Eagle River (approximately 140 kilometres), totaling an area of approximately 3,000 square kilometres.

“The waterway provincial park will be established under the Provincial Parks Act. This designation provides the necessary legislative mechanism to protect an area which exhibits exceptional natural, cultural, and recreational characteristics while at the same time acting as stimulus for sustainable economic opportunities.

“The Eagle River is an important and highly productive waterway for Atlantic salmon and the area includes important summer and winter range for the threatened Mealy Mountains woodland caribou herd.

“In 2010, the Minister of Environment and Conservation committed to conducting public consultations prior to establishment of the Eagle River Waterway Provincial Park. And today” that pledge in 2015 was still being committed to “along with groups such as the Friends of Eagle River,” and his words were “this government is committed to protecting and promoting the River and we believe in the value of meaningful engagement with all affected and interested stakeholders.”

By those comments, Mr. Speaker, it’s clear that our government was committed to protecting our natural areas and we were making significant progress while continuing to grow the economy. We were striking that sensible balance.

We made some other commitments during the 2015 election campaign. We talked about

protecting the environment from harmful emissions by shifting to hydro-based electric for the province. While we fought for hydro, some of our Members opposite fought against us. We knew where we stood, whereas many of them still do not know where they stand.

We took a strong stand against hydraulic fracking on the West Coast. I suspect the Member behind this resolution appreciates this moratorium we imposed because their constituents were loudly calling for it and we listened. It’s not clear that all Members opposite share the opposition to fracking, perhaps that why the Stephenville area MHA is a little worried today and pressing once again for environmental leadership.

A 2015 election policy included our commitment that as we continue to develop our offshore oil industry and onshore operations related to that, we are being vigilant and demanding the protection of marine ecosystems. We also said we have not given up demanding that Ottawa take custodial management of the nose and tail of the Grand Bank to show global leadership in protecting sensitive subsea ecosystems like this from harmful fishing practices.

We also proposed the pristine Newfoundland and Labrador campaign discourage littering, encourage reasonable beautification initiatives and penalize polluters. To complement these policies, we made commitments that protect and repair the environment. We talked about investments in infrastructure from waste management facilities to new public buildings that meet green construction standards.

We talked about investing in eco-friendly public transit strategies, cycling and walking trails, and to get people out of their vehicles and living healthier in the process. We talked about taking greater advantage of electric vehicle technology. We talked about demanding Ottawa’s cleanup of *Manolis L*, which today it’s still an ongoing issue but the federal government has committed funds and we hope to see that resolved in the near future.

We talked about sustainable agriculture and aquaculture, which if done properly can protect our natural areas while sustaining people who

live there. There have been advancements made by the current administration on that, but we can still do more.

There's a difference between what we propose and what others may have in mind. When you strike the right balance according to the needs of the people of a particular area you can offer a measure of protection while ensuring people can continue to use those areas.

Madam Speaker, you take Gros Morne National Park, it's protected but people can also walk the trails as long as they do so respectfully. Obviously, we don't want ATV users to be out ripping up sensitive boglands of the province, but walking and riding snowmobile trails in certain areas can enable users to experience the natural beauty of our outdoors while minimizing the harmful impact.

We don't want to keep outfitters from carrying out their business. We don't want to keep people from camping in our wilderness areas, or enjoying their cabins as they have done so for generations. Most people who enjoy the outdoors like this are exceptionally respectful of the natural environment. They are always some who treat the outdoors like a landfill, but most do not.

Obviously, we cannot afford to hire police and wildlife officers to patrol every inch of the wilderness to ensure people are behaving respectfully. Our officers can patrol some areas at random, and that sends a message that it's risky to cross the line, but we have to trust people and educate people that it's important to share the responsibility for keeping our province clean and beautiful. There is a healthy balance.

Madam Speaker, if someone believes that that's not enough, then let me make the case and let's also hear from those who argue the balance should be a little more tolerant. Every voice needs to be heard. The environmentalists, and also the people who want to continue enjoying the land with their families and friends in a respectful manner.

The third WHEREAS clause talks about signs: "... WHEREAS a well-governed, scientifically-based system for designating protected areas has

the potential to benefit our environment, our economy and our research endeavors ...."

It is true that the evidence-based approach guided by environmental professionals serves us well. These experts will tell us if something is at risk and in need of special protection. Under the environmental assessment process, we require these experts to inform us where the lines are and how to avoid crossing them to minimize damage and risk. They can also tell us how to change our behaviours so we can continue to engage in recreational economic development activities without doing irreparable harm to the places we care about. No one wants to turn the province into a wasteland, but these scientists also have to appreciate the need for our people to live and work here.

Some of our industries have environmental impacts. Cutting trees for forestry has an impact. We don't do this in national parks but we do allow it in other areas. We moderate the impact by changing the way we harvest, by replenishing the trees. We take new trees grown through silviculture.

Scientists enable us to figure out how to engage in forestry sustainability. We owe them a debt for their expert advice, but they would not have served any of us if they did not draw the line in the sand and said absolutely no forest industry activity in our province. Again, there must be a balance.

Madam Speaker, as my time is winding down, I just want to finish up by saying that Members opposite in the Official Opposition generally support this Natural Areas System Plan. We have some concerns; we want to proceed with caution. We kind of differ somewhat on the percentages of what's protected and what's not protected, how much should be protected, but generally speaking, we feel that we need to proceed with caution and have a balance.

Thank you very much.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.



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

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

I'm very happy to stand up here and speak to a private Member's resolution. It's not something that I've gotten a lot of opportunity to do in the last couple of years. Certainly when I was on the other side I brought a number forward, but this one particularly, I applauded the motion. I think it's an excellent resolution that's being brought forward here and it's something that I think all of us on this side are supportive of.

The reason I'm taking just a few minutes today to talk about this is that this is one area I actually have some experience in trying to advocate for. So what I'm going to do is just provide some background on my experience as it relates to marine conservation areas in particular.

When I first ran for election in the fall of 2011, I first became aware of the Town of Burgeo's efforts to have a marine conservation area declared along the South Coast which would encompass the communities of Ramea, Grey River and Francois. It's a significant area.

When I found out about it in 2011, it had actually been talked about for almost a decade and, unfortunately, it hadn't made much progress. They brought it up during that campaign. It was something that I was aware of. I looked in to. I know they spoke to – at the time – the PCs about it, as they were in government at the time. Then when I got in Opposition, I took it and tried to run with it. Unfortunately, during my four years in Opposition, it's an area that we didn't make much headway with.

I dealt with two former Ministers of Environment on it and, quite frankly, one of them – again, I'm not about to get into names. This is not about trying to slag anybody here. It's just about talking about my experiences in trying to move this forward. Unfortunately, in one case, I asked the minister specifically and said: Where are we on this? The minister said: Here's where it is, it's tied up and whatever else.

Months later, I found out he had actually made a decision on it to turn it down. That was months before I had even asked him. So, in fact, it was

quite – I'm not going to put any words here but I was quite disappointed that I could be treated that way and that the people would be treated that way.

Now, moving forward, I did deal with different ministers on it. I do appreciate, actually – he was a minister at the time – Vaughan Granter, sat down with me in Corner Brook and brought officials in from the various departments because it wasn't just Environment. Fisheries was there. They had particular people for aquaculture. They had Natural Resources. There was a wide range of people sat down with me to talk it.

One of the issues, when you talk about protection areas and conservation areas, is that you have to be, I guess, cognizant of the fact that by doing this, by protecting an area, you may theoretically eliminate its potential in other areas. That was the big thing. Well, we can't do this because if you do it we're going to lose the opportunity to do oil. We're going to lose the opportunity for gas. We're going to lose aquaculture. We're going to lose Fisheries, but I've never subscribed to that view.

In fact, my colleague, actually, a friend of mine, the Mayor of Burgeo, has always said that the two can live in harmony. They do not need to be mutually exclusive of each other. We can have conservation and protection, but at the same time, realize that we have resources all over this province that can be exploited and used for the best interests of the people of this province. You don't have to pick one or the other. They can work and co-exist together. That's the point of view I was trying to bring forward during my four years in Opposition.

So you fast-forward to 2015, there's a change of government and it's something I continue to work on. One of the people I brought it forward to, somebody who would have had a big role in this, would have been the current Minister of Natural Resources.

Unlike previous ministers in the previous regime, this minister said: What are you trying to do? Let me learn about it. I'll give her all the credit in the world. Her and her department took the time to sit with me, to talk with me, to work

on it, recognizing the fact that a lot of the data was outdated.

The fact is it was a huge area, and since that time the geotechnical work that had been done, the oil exploration work that had been done was huge. There had been a lot done, but this is where we said: Well, why don't we come back and update where we are, recognize the fact that oil exploration is important to an area like this. Aquaculture is important to an area like this, but at the same time, marine conservation and marine protection offer us opportunities as this province that can also generate economic opportunity.

I've worked with groups like CPAWS to talk about ways that we can do things in this province that will generate opportunities here for these areas. I have these communities that would like to discuss this. Do you know what? To the minister's credit, she said: I'm willing to work with you to further this.

Are we there yet? No, we're not, but we've had more conservations in the last year than I had in the previous – then there had been in the previous 15 years.

What I'm saying is I'm very proud to be a part of a government where we have expertise on multiple levels as it relates to our environment. More so than the expertise, we have a willingness, all throughout this government, to work on ideas that are going to benefit the people of this province.

I'm not going to take a whole lot more time. I just thought this was an opportunity – obviously, I'm going to support this. This is a true private Member's resolution. This is an idea that was generated by our Member, that was seconded by our Member and they brought it forward here.

This is something – there may be people in this caucus that may not agree, for all I know. We'll see how that goes. Me, I agree with it because I had the value of working on this. I know of its importance. I know of its necessity, but to echo the Member for Mount Pearl North, we had to do it with caution.

You can't proceed headlong in anything. We've had enough actions in the past where we

proceeded without the basis of evidence. We've lived through that and that's why we deal with it very often. We had to clean up the mistakes they made because they proceeded without the basis of good evidence. We realize that. We recognize that. Our Cabinet recognizes this, our Members, our caucus who have done a significant amount of research on this, they realize this.

So we need to proceed with caution but we need to proceed with optimism. The fact is, we do have a way that we can recognize the natural beauty, diversity and ecological awareness that we need to preserve as a province, but we also have economic opportunity that we can do at the same time. They can be done together.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this. I applaud the private Member's resolution, which I intend on supporting. I think this is strong. I think this is important. I'm hoping to get support from all sides on this. I appreciate the effort they've put into this. I appreciate the fact that I'm allowed to stand up and speak to it today.

I'll certainly be supporting it and we'll move forward, hopefully, for achieving a marine conservation area for my District of Burgeo – La Poile, which I know is supported by the communities there. The fact is I think it will allow us opportunities that right now may not exist on the South Coast.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm very happy to stand and speak to this private Member's motion. I would like to thank the Member for St. George's – Humber for a really substantive and relevant private Member's motion that is meaningful and progressive. It's a delight to be able to stand in this House today and speak to this.

I'd also like to commend the Minister Responsible for Climate Change and Service

NL. How great it is when we look at how important it is to have diversity in this House. He speaks to this Member's motion from a place of expertise and passion. I think that's wonderful. The more diversity that we have in this House of Assembly, the better able we are to do the work that we have been tasked with by the people of the province.

It is a pleasure to stand and speak to this private Member's motion. I actually feel great gratitude for such a good private Member's motion; however, I am a little bit disappointed that it doesn't have any more directive than simply saying that the "House supports the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador designating more protected areas in our Province." It would be wonderful if it could be a little more directive. I know that we are somewhat limited as to what we can do in our private Member's motions, but wouldn't it be great if we'd be able to put some timelines there and something that is a little more directive so that it really directs government to get going.

We know that we have among the best *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act* in the country. We truly do. In Newfoundland and Labrador we do and we can be proud of that; however, every government in the past 30 years has dragged its heels on this. They have lacked activity, I believe, because of lobbying from different industries, so government has been hesitant.

We heard also the Minister Responsible for Climate Change and Service NL saying that we have to look at a balance. We also heard Members from the Opposition say the same thing, but what does that really mean? What balance?

We don't seem to have a balance right now when we look at the low percentage of land that is under our *Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Act* that have been designated protected areas. So we have a lot of room to grow and I believe that we should not be conservative in our approach to this, that we must be progressive. I know that there is a way to do it and I'm going to speak about that, how we can progress in a way that looks at sustainability, that looks at the needs of the province.

Also, one of the things that we have to take into account is that there is no more land that will be created in Newfoundland and Labrador unless we – I don't know – come together with the Turks and Caicos, but we have what we have. I know there is a lot of support for that but, really, we have what we have. It's doubtful that we will see the creation of any new species of animals or fauna. So what we have is what we have to protect, what we have to conserve; not protect in a closed manner, but also make sure that what we do helps the sustainability of the incredible treasures that we have in Newfoundland and Labrador, both on the land, in the skies and in the water. I believe that's what this is about.

I feel extremely hopeful. I feel optimistic. I hope I am not being naive, but my hope and my optimism also comes not only from the fact that there's a private Member's motion that encourages government, but again, we've encouraged all of us, encouraged government to do certain things. We have that incredibly strong act, yet so much lagging in that area.

Also, because of the activism of so many groups who've done a lot of work – I will mention some of those as well a little later on because I think that the pressure from both within this House, but particularly the pressure outside the House from people in the conservation movement, people from the ecological movement, from the environmental movement, people who care about our forests, who care about our streams, who care about our wildlife, who care about our fauna and people particularly as well who work in that area – if we listen with a real intent to hear, they will help map and guide the way. People do believe in social justice but also in economic justice as well. There is a way for us to go forward. I don't believe that we have been working in balance, that the balance has been tipped and has prevented subsequent governments from doing the right thing and expanding our protected areas.

I would like to say that I believe many people in Newfoundland and Labrador and interest groups have been waiting for this, have been waiting for government to jump in and to do the right thing. I know that the minister's mandate letter stated – and the direction in the mandate letter said: "Advancing protected areas planning is central" – not a good thing but central – "to

environmental and cultural conservation, as well as to sustainable development.” There’s your balance. It takes into account both, but let’s see how that’s operationalized.

“A well-governed and scientifically-based system for designating protected areas has the potential to benefit not only our environment ...” which is so important. We are the stewards of our environment, we all know that. But also it has the potential to benefit not only our environment but our economy through ecotourism and research endeavours. Mealy Mountains, Mistaken Point, Gros Morne, the treasures; St. Mary’s bird sanctuary, Cape St. Mary’s, treasures.

“You are expected to finalize and publicly release a Natural Areas System Plan in collaboration with your colleagues.” This letter was dated in December 2015. We know that we’ve had a Natural Areas System Plan or report of one for years, for 20 years. No one has seen it publicly; it has never been released publicly. It’s a secret plan.

I don’t know, we don’t have any double naught spies here, how come that hasn’t been released? Is it that we need to go further with our plan now or is that plan so comprehensive that it can guide our actions? I believe that there’s a way to find that out. When that plan is released, when it sees the light of day – because it should, it belongs to the people of the province.

We have lots of expertise in the province. We have scientists who work for government, who work for the people of the province. We have scientists at MUN; we have retired scientists who are working as activists in conservation groups. We have what it needs to be able to move forward, so let’s do that.

I’m hoping that not only on this side of the House but on that side of the House people are going to push and keep the pressure on for government to release that Natural Areas System Plan. Some of it may be a bit controversial, but we can work with that. We have smart people and we have treasures that we have to protect. So I believe that it is possible.

We have stalled, protected areas because the Natural Areas System Plan, it hasn’t been put in

place, and CPAWS –and some of my colleagues have already mentioned CPAWS; that’s the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Newfoundland and Labrador branch – has said it’s been almost a year and a half since this direction was provided to complete the System Plan.

Here we are well into 2017 and it’s been over a year since the mandate letter has directed the minister to do this. Now, there have been some changes, but that’s no excuse. We can no longer drag our heels. It’s no longer acceptable.

CPAWS Newfoundland and Labrador is growing increasingly concerned about these delays, particularly given the recent changes made to the department previously responsible for implementing the plan. So that’s a bit of a problem, and I’m going to talk a little bit about some of those cuts as well. These stalled, protected areas represent some of the best – it’s so interesting to hear this – remaining natural areas in the province, including incredibly significant coastal seabird colonies, species at risk, habitat and important wetland habitat.

These are in danger and we are the stewards of our province, along with the people of the province. We can no longer afford to drag our feet on this. It is imperative that we move, with speed, but with informed, scientific-based decisions. I believe again that we can do this.

I would like to particularly highlight the work of Nature Newfoundland and Labrador, and among its members are Douglas Ballam, an incredible scientist who has worked with the provincial government for years, who is an expert in the area of conservation and wildlife. He’s available for consultation. He has years and years of experience.

The Sierra Club, Fred Winsor, and the folks with the Sierra Club; CPAWS, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society of Newfoundland and Labrador; the Nature Conservancy of Canada; the Protected Areas Association. So people like Douglas Ballam, Laura Jackson, John D. Jacobs, Jon Lien, Tina. There are many, many people who can be involved in this process. We do have treasures and we have to protect them.

Some of the treasures we have that are in the protected areas are 32 provincial parks – I've been to many of them, I know that many of us in the House have; 20 wilderness and geological reserves; three wildlife reserves and one wildlife park.

There are federal protected areas in our province as well: three national parks, two national historic sites, three migratory bird sanctuaries. Many of us have been to many of them. Burnt Cape Ecological Reserve; Sandy Cove Ecological Reserve; West Brook; Fortune Head Ecological Reserve, where there are fossils that are being preserved; Mistaken Point, what a treasure, a UNESCO site.

I think most of us realize what that means to have a UNESCO designation. It's a treasure and actually belongs to us, but it is our responsibility to care for it on behalf of the people of the whole world. This is something of interest to people around the globe and it is put into our hands to care for it properly. We haven't done such a good job. Hopefully, that's going to get a bit better. We have to be optimistic about that.

I encourage Members of the House and members of the public to go to the pages of [theindependent.ca](http://theindependent.ca). It's a free online newspaper. Douglas Ballam occasionally writes a column about conservation and wildlife.

He says – I see I only have a minute left so I'm going to have to speed up, but basically saying his approach and his suggestion is that government look to a White Paper process. Let's do a White Paper. Let's release the plan. Let's gather people. Let's have some public consultations on how we can implement that plan. Is the plan still relevant? Does it need any other updates? Then let's listen to each other. Let's hear the experts. Let's hear the activists and then let that be some of the guiding force, some of the mapping for the execution, for the delivery of our act. I believe that is a good way to go. The White Paper process will be a guide to policy development in our area of conservation and wildlife.

I believe we have the expertise in our communities; we have the expertise in our public service. Let's do that. Let's roll up our

sleeves and let's move on with this. I will happily support this private Member's motion.

Thank you very much.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

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

It's great to lend voice to the debate this afternoon. This afternoon is a private Member's resolution as we debate on Wednesdays here in the House. For anyone listening at home or online, essentially a private Member's resolution is a motion brought in by a private Member, that being anyone who's not a Member of Cabinet, particularly any Member on this side of the House and/or the Opposition side as well.

Today, the motion has been brought in by the Member for St. George's – Humber which I'm very fortunate to have as a colleague, as the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port and him St. George's – Humber. We actually both represent the Bay St. George area and do a lot of work together and work on a lot of files together. I'm very pleased that he brought this motion in today and actually quite honoured that he asked me to second the motion as well.

I will just read it out loud for the record. The motion states: "WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has a spectacular range of biodiversity in need of protection; and WHEREAS just 4.6 per cent of our provincial land mass is currently protected, which is just half of the overall Canadian average; and WHEREAS a well-governed, scientifically-based system for designating protected areas has the potential to benefit our environment, our economy and our research endeavors; THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House supports the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador designating more protected areas in our Province."

That's the motion as it stands, certainly a bit open to interpretation in some regard as noted. The PC Members wish to urge that this is okay in theory but they would urge caution. I certainly understand where they're coming from there. I

believe the Government House Leader, Minister of Justice, kind of spoke exactly to that. I further believe the Minister of Service NL and Member for Lake Melville spoke to that as well, as did the Member for St. George's – Humber. Caution to be used in all principles, in all guiding legislation and motions that the government would bring forward.

The Member brought this forward simply due to the percentage. When we look at the percentage of where we rank nationally, we're certainly on the lower end of the spectrum. The Minister of Service NL did correct some of the information that was stated earlier.

The Member for Mount Pearl North had stated, and I believe the Opposition will get a chance to speak again, but he was quite taken aback by the fact that we had specifically mentioned some 4.6 per cent of our land mass being protected. He went on to quote from a federal report, which my colleague for St. George's – Humber had referenced and researched as well.

He went on to quote from that report some 7.3 per cent. He said, so we're close to Saskatchewan. We're doing quite fine. We've made significant strides in this area and we're doing far better than what the Member would suggest. Well, as the Minister of Service NL, the former Minister of Environment had pointed out, that 7.3 per cent involved the national parks as well.

What the Member for St. George's – Humber had brought forward today is simply pointing out the fact that we have 4.6 per cent of our land mass, over 400,000 kilometres, just 4.6 per cent of that is currently being protected. He's raising the issue today, and in the spirit of the motion is simply to start a conversation about how we can do things better and to bring this to the forefront.

The Member for St. John's Centre had suggested it could be a bit more directive with respect to the motion, I certainly understand that. I would like to think that if Members opposite, be it from the NDP caucus or the PC caucus, have any issue with the motion, they always have an opportunity to bring in an amendment to that motion. We didn't hear any amendments today, but I certainly take that and that's well noted.

She also further noted that the natural area assistance plan has not been released. For folks who work in this field and folks who follow this type of file, they would all be very well aware of that as well. The natural area assistance plan is something that has been kicking around government for 20 years, I think the Member for St. John's Centre had mentioned and I understand the Member for St. George's – Humber will get back to.

Right now, it's something that, as she noted, was in the minister's mandate letter. In speaking with the former Minister of Environment, I understand that that mandate has now transferred on to the Minister Responsible for Fisheries and Land Resources.

I'm just going to quote what's in the mandate letter, because this is something that was actually noted in the Liberal red book in 2015 as one of the promises, in section 4.5.3 protected areas planning. It was something that was specifically mentioned in the Liberal red book and something that the hon. Premier had pointed out in the mandate letter to the Minister of Environment.

It states: "Advancing protected areas planning is central to environmental and cultural conservation, as well as to sustainable development. A well-governed and scientifically-based system for designating protected areas has the potential to benefit not only our environment, but our economy, through ecotourism and research endeavors. You are expected" – and the you is referring to the minister, this is direction from the Premier – "to finalize and publicly release a Natural Areas System Plan in collaboration with your colleagues. You must also develop a provincial wetlands strategy which will, among other things, guide development to avoid or reduce efforts on our valuable wetlands. This strategy will provide a formal framework to support conservation work presently being undertaken by municipalities."

That was the direction from the Premier to the former minister of Environment and, as I mentioned, now rests with the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources. So it's something that has been promised by the government, it's something that has been directed in a mandate

letter. I have to congratulate the Member for St. George's – Humber for bringing it up today so we can have this conversation.

The Member for Mount Pearl North had mentioned much of the land mass of the province had been protected. Well, I guess that's not entirely true when you do look at 4.6 per cent of the land mass. To say that much of it has been protected is a bit of a stretch, Madam Speaker, and I think we can do better.

As mentioned as well, there are a number of groups across the province that are doing better. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society NL was mentioned. They do a great job of promoting the parks and ensuring that some of the areas in the parks are left for recreation use for residents and tourists alike.

Ducks Unlimited was mentioned. I was actually fortunate to attend a fundraiser with Ducks Unlimited just recently with the Member for St. George's – Humber. Ducks Unlimited had a fundraiser held in Stephenville. It's certainly great to hear from that organization and some of the work that they're doing around protecting our wetlands.

Then, finally, the Nature Conservancy of Canada was mentioned as well. Myself and the Member took an opportunity to speak briefly this morning with two individuals from the Nature Conservancy of Canada: Lana Campbell and Megan Lafferty. They're doing great work and, most recently, were doing some work in the Codroy Valley area.

The Codroy Valley area is on our province's Southwest Coast. Recently, the Nature Conservancy of Canada just purchased an additional 150 acres of land. This is a non-profit group that purchases land from private landowners in an effort to protect. I think sometimes the message gets lost. It's all about education and that's what the idea is today is to create education and awareness.

Sometimes the message gets lost and citizens and people of the public think if you're going to protect this area over here, well, I'm not allowed to go skidoo in that area, or I can't use my ATV, or we can't access this area for fishing. They're not putting up fences around these areas; these

are areas that are being designated for protection so we can simply enjoy their beauty and the natural beauty that lies within them.

I think they do great work. It was a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak with them this morning. They certainly could use volunteers. Anyone who's listening at home right now and anyone in this House, for that matter, who'd be interested in volunteering, can certainly reach out. I understand they were on *Open Line* last week promoting some of the work they were doing in the Codroy Valley area.

Once they initially purchase an area, they have to do a bit of a baseline study and try and get an effort as to see what type of species are there, be that species of plants or various animals or birds or waterfowl. There's a number of things they try to document to get an idea as to what's in that area so they can really learn more, they can do further research and it will further inform their ongoing efforts.

In addition to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, again the other areas mentioned are some of the areas within our national parks and provincial parks. I had the great pleasure to travel extensively around this province over the last number of years. I certainly enjoy outdoor recreation. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, I've snowboarded on top of the Tablelands in the winter and I've hiked to the top of the Tablelands in the summer. Gros Morne National Park is absolutely supreme beauty.

On the West Coast, we're so blessed with many natural areas, as mentioned in the Codroy Valley.

**MR. LETTO:** Marble Mountain (inaudible).

**MR. FINN:** The Member for Lab West is mentioning Marble Mountain. I don't believe Marble Mountain would fall into a conservancy area but it is certainly something that we're pleased to have on the West Coast.

I guess in speaking about this there are so many benefits and one of them is economical, and that's certainly what Marble Mountain aims to do. You look at some of the ecotourism – and, of course, we used to have an adventure tourism program on the West Coast with CNA.

Unfortunately, that was lost under the PC administration. When we look about ecotourism, education, recreation, some of the benefits, scientific research. We have always invited tourists to our province and tourists are always so happy to come see our beautiful land mass and what it has to offer.

I think when we talk about protecting areas it is so important that we keep this on the agenda and in the forefront. In fact just today, in talking about natural areas, CBC *Radio Noon* had a whole area dedicated to litter and the littering problem in the province and what can municipalities do and what can other areas be encouraged to do.

Now that the snow has melted, Madam Speaker, we see some of the garbage rear its ugly head and this is in our public areas. Of course some of our protected areas are a little further away and off the beaten path. But when you talk about keeping Newfoundland and Labrador clean, it is certainly something near and dear to my heart.

Just a couple of weeks ago we were debating a private Member's resolution on encouraging recycling in the province. It was a motion in fact that I brought in –

**MR. LETTO:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. FINN:** Yes, in fact, thank you to the Member for Labrador West advising me. The PC administration, the PC caucus, was completely against encouraging recycling. They've given an inkling they may be supportive of this motion today. We'll soon see when we go for a vote on the motion here in just a short less than half hour.

It's all about keeping these conversations in the forefront and bringing this up in the House of Assembly gives it that sense. It certainly provides direction to departments within government. I know there are a number of departments that would be involved in looking at the conservancy of various natural areas.

Of course, we do have to strike a balance. As the Minister of Justice said when he spoke, there has to be a balance for aquaculture development, for mining. There has to be a balance for forestry. There certainly needs to be a balance for all

these things. I think that principle is not lost on us and I think it's something that no matter which party would represent the government I would like to think that keeping that balance in mind is something that would be on the forefront.

I'm very pleased to just lend my voice to this important motion for a few moments. I'm looking forward to hearing from one of the PC Members to speak before the Member for St. George's – Humber concludes. We look forward to their support on this motion.

I'm very pleased to see that it's in the mandate letter for the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources. I'm very pleased that releasing the Natural Areas System Plan is something that is encouraged throughout this mandate to be done and to be done publicly.

It's very unfortunate that under 12 years of a PC government, we did not see any action or releasing of a Natural Areas System Plan. Again, it's something that's in the mandate letter for the minister and something that now that we're speaking about it today, I'm certain will take that much more importance. It will encourage a variety of government departments to get together and see how we can proceed to make this a reality.

With that, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to say thanks to the Member for bringing it in and certainly thanks to the Members opposite for lending their voice. We'll look for their support as we embark to vote before the afternoon is out.

I encourage anyone out there and any Member of this House that if they have any interest in this cause, there are a number of great organizations in this province and across this great country that do work in this regard. We all have a part to play to assist them in moving that agenda forward.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.



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

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

It's, indeed, a privilege to stand and speak to this private Member's resolution today. I want to echo what has been said on this side of the House today that we support protecting the lands and the ecology of our province here.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Again, as was mentioned by some of my hon. colleagues on the government side, it's about a tempered balance here. There's a key component here that we have to address this in a process that ensures we still protect our ecology, we still enable people to do all the things that are culturally within their range in the wilderness, and that the wildlife still has an ability to foster in those particular areas.

I just want to read something here, just a quote from a book: Newfoundland and Labrador has a spectacular range of biodiversity that needs to be protected. "From wilderness, wildlife and ecological reserves to sanctuaries, parks and national historic sites, protected areas help preserve the natural beauty of our province. Advancing protected areas planning is central to environmental and cultural conservation, as well as to sustainable development. A well-governed and scientifically-based system for designating protected areas has the potential to benefit not only our environment, but our economy, through ecotourism and research endeavors."

Development and culture, along with our own heritage, adding into the fact that our ecology is protected can be a benefit to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

That one paragraph to me, Madam Speaker, speaks to the volumes of the whole conversation that we've had here. It's about that balance between protecting our environment, assessing again – we have a fairly large land mass in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's very diverse when you talk of our streams, our rivers, our wildlife, our flowers, trees and all the diversities, our hills, our mountains, and all the things relevant to that. We have a responsibility to ensure that we protect those, while at the same time, we have a society that we want to provide for and we have a society that has every

intention of being able to grow. So we have to find that balance.

We can dispute about how much is protected within the province, but, there's no doubt, we all realize there's an ability to protect other parcels of land. Where those are, what it is we're protecting in those is very important. That's why I noted there in that statement, it says around finding a scientific way to do it. Not just because we have one group that likes this particular area, or there was something in them from the past, or it has one significant shrub, tree or animal, or something like that. There has to be a balance. Nobody sets out to alter the environment, but at the same time there are potential development issues here around our mineral development. So the balance is very important here.

Then we have industries such as the mining industry. It's very important in this province. It's very important, I think, to all of us from a tax point of view, but particularly for certain communities; more significant impacts on the local environment. You can't mine a mine without having some impact on the environment, and that's a reality everybody accepts. How you mitigate that impact, but particularly how you first designate, what are the most important protected areas from a cultural point of view, from an ecological point of view, from an economic assessment point of view. All the things are factors that have to be looked at. It's very important we do that.

I am glad it didn't just have a blanket approach of saying that everything that's within 30 feet or 30 metres of a river, and is beyond the populist of more than 40 people, will become part of the protective area. There has to be a scientific approach to how this is done.

There are some jurisdictions that do it very scientifically. They look at river streams, they follow that. They look at the ecology of the land. They look at specific speciality animals, tress, these types of things; whatever may be of importance. They also may look at the significance from an historical point of view, what that land represents and the protection as part of that. There are a number of factors here that need to be looked at.

Fortunate enough for us, we've gotten to a point where we do things – at least we're on the right page. We don't mine in national parks here. These are things that are important to people when we designate that, but if we expand our protection areas to places where the mining potential is rich, what's the impact on people? That's where we talk about it.

We've all mentioned over here, it's about that balance. We need to ensure that. As we do in Newfoundland and Labrador and over the last number of years, we've been putting out more and more mineral exploration permits because we know that grows the economy. We know right now we have, I'd say, anywhere in the vicinity of 6,000 to 10,000 people who work directly in the mining industry; very valuable. It's a billion-dollar industry here. While there's a slope in it right now, we know the potential. We know where it needs to go.

We talk about; despite low commodity prices here, mineral shipments are forecast to be \$2.9 billion in 2017. So the Voisey's Bay underground mine expansion projects have started. Tata Steel Minerals Canada has started. IOC has sanctioned the Wabush 3 project. Rambler Metals & Mining announced some finances to support those minerals. It's very important things.

So we have to take a realistic approach that there has to be a balance. If we stop those projects because we came up with an off-the-cuff formula that infringed on those areas being able to be mined, than we're not doing justice to the environment and we're not doing it to our economy. There has to be a good balance there.

I would hope as this moves forward, and the dialogue goes with the government and it gets to a point where it's going to be a piece of legislation that's brought forward, that stakeholders are engaged. There's no doubt, everybody comes from a vested interest. The mineral industry will come from one wanting to have minimal restrictions on them. Environmentalists may come from another point where they want: Let's protect it all so we don't have any problems there, but the balance is somewhere in between.

Plus, the balance could be with the mining companies or any other type of exploration or anything that we may do. The logging companies may have to do stuff. It's very important; it's not just to one industry, it could be – we've talked about this – aquaculture, on-land aquaculture. So there could be areas there that make sense because you have flowing rivers and that.

You have to make sure when we do this that it doesn't hinder development. And on the other side, you have to ensure that the policy or the approach shows that if an industry is going to be developed in an area that we would have liked to protect, that the footprint is minimal, the afterwards footprint is minimal. There are ways of doing that.

I've had the fortunate ability to travel around the world and see places where I've gone and they show a picture of 30 years ago. It was a massive mining community and now it's a beautiful park, a reserve, an ecological protected area. There are ways of doing that. With use of technology and our understanding, now we can move that to the next level.

We want to keep emphasizing, as this moves forward and the discussions get there, that you engage the particular stakeholders here. If you look at some mapping – and I've had in my own district where some environmental mapping was overlaid with the town's development, and we have some real challenges. If we followed all the rules we'd be telling people you have to move your houses. We could never do any more development. We can't put an access road going through the middle of a town. It becomes a unique balancing act there as part of it.

But at the same time in communities, you want to be able to ensure that the environment is protected and that people – the environment itself, the esthetics of the environment is a draw too. It's a draw for people wanting to live in those communities. It's a draw for business to be able to be developed. It doesn't necessarily all have to be that you scar the land in certain ways and that. It's important to realize we have to find that balance.

While this addresses the fact that it generalizes it that we want to be able to protect more land, I

think it's probably an easy do which is about where and how and how much and what's appropriate over periods of time. That we don't put ourselves in a corner, pigeonhole ourselves so at the end of the day when there's something that comes along that we think is beneficial to every Newfoundlander and Labradorian, be it some type of development, that all of a sudden now, we either have to go back and change full legislation or violate our own ethics when it came to how we were protecting it.

A bit of vision, a bit of foresight and that can come, when we look at – you know you have some jurisdictions that had 15 per cent of their land mass protected so they've obviously put more resources into it. They've obviously looked at it from a different perspective. They've obviously made some errors and learned from them. So we have an opportunity now where we're starting fresh from that perspective, and there has been some work done.

I know in the previous administration, there had been discussions around doing more areas around the ecology and protecting land masses. There's some mapping out there, it's just now realizing exactly what's out there and in what areas.

If you take some of the things – I know in my own district in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's some of the environmental assessment areas there and flood plains and all this. There are a couple of ecological reserves down there that were designated 100 years ago or 150 years ago, now we're in the middle of a town. So how do you protect them and give stewardship to the organizations that around that.

There's a balance and we're trying to work to do that there. I think that's a small example. That example, if we can get that worked out, could be a template for how you move and find other areas that can be protected in this great province of ours.

It's about that balance of keeping our ecology alive; the beauty of what we have. The next generation will be able to have that, but also ensuring that the land masses we have that are of value from an economic point of view, from a development point of view, are done so it benefits everybody here without scaring the

economy, without the scaring the province itself and the ecology.

Madam Speaker, I'll take my seat on that. I just want to acknowledge that we will be supporting this.

Thank you.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** If the hon. Member for St. George's – Humber speaks now he will close debate.

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

It's great to have this debate here in the House today and great to have so many people participate in a very constructive way and to add their voice to this issue. It's a very, very interesting debate we've had here today.

One of the issues related to the percentage of land, and I think that's a valid point. It depends on what time, how dated your figures are and if you include federal and provincial lands together, but even if you look at the latest figures that I have from the Canadian Council on Ecological Areas – it was released in 2006 but because of the time it takes to get printed, the data is current to December 31, 2015. No matter what information you look at or what data you look at, I think it's important to recognize that we are – in terms of the amount of protected areas that we have in this province – lower than other jurisdictions in Canada. We're near the bottom of the pack in terms of how we protect areas in this province. It's an important point and I certainly recognize what the Member for Mount Pearl North has said in particular.

It was interesting; the Member for St. John's Centre mentioned the activists and the recognition that they deserve in keeping this issue alive and pushing it forward. Indeed, that's something I recognize as well, Mr. Speaker.

The whole idea of bringing forward this motion was brought to me by people in my own district and some people from the Grenfell Campus who are very involved in environmental issues. Some retired people from the department as well brought this issue to be and some just general outdoors people brought this to me. People who enjoy the outdoors and want to see it preserved

brought his issue to me, and that's why I decided to bring it forward.

I think it's important that we have this kind of debate because the environment, it's like – if you look at issue management, you look at issues that are urgent and are important. If you look at the environment, I guess you could make the argument that it is urgent, but maybe it's not – yet anyway – at a crisis level and something we can conveniently excuse and ignore for a while, but it's important to the long-term viability that we have this type of discussion here as we have had today.

I'm very pleased with that and very pleased that I've been able to have conversations with some of the activists and people who believe in extending the protected areas in our province.

The other issue that Members brought up was the need for a balance. I guess the idea of having a balance between development and protection of the environment is something that's been around for a while. I think it's important that we realize what the right balance is and that we have public input into what the balance is.

In the process of creating more protected areas, the way I would see it going and the process that seems to be outlined in the legislation, the next step here is to see the release of the protected areas of the Natural Areas System Plan. The release of that material would give members of the public an opportunity to come forward and to talk about how the establishments of these protected areas would impact on them.

This plan would identify candidate areas or potential areas to be advanced in a protected natural areas strategy. When you identify these areas and some of the study areas are selected based on scientific criteria – are there special species or plants that exist only in certain areas that need protection? So those scientific criteria or the importance of wildlife populations that use the land. I think as well the current and historical land use of an area is important in terms of developing a Natural Areas System Plan as well.

Also I think it's realistic and it's reasonably effective to consider other possible land uses and to minimize land use conflict. Are there areas,

for example, in the forestry industry that would be more difficult to log that can be preserved? That should be a factor in how we select these areas.

I think it's reasonable to balance these things and that would happen through a public debate, a public discussion, the involvement of everyone in that process of looking at this natural areas plan. I think that's something that we should consider.

As well before I conclude, I think we have many areas that need protection in this province. We have to realize the importance of protecting areas for future generations. I think we have to recognize that we haven't done a good job in terms of keeping up with other jurisdictions. We haven't realized the benefits of having these natural areas protected. We talk about health-in-all-policies and we talk about a holistic approach to government. I think if you look at recreation and health and the benefits that can be derived from having protected areas and the social benefits from having protected areas where outdoor recreation is available, it is very important to our society and it's something that we should move forward with.

I'm encouraging all Members to support this motion, to send the message to the public, to government, that we, as Members, think this is important and we would like to see it move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Osborne):** All those in favour of the motion?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Those against?

I declare the motion approved.

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

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

It being Wednesday, the House – prior to that, I remind all hon. Members that there is a technical

briefing in the Legislature tonight for the Management Commission. Other Members are welcome to attend as observers.

The House is now adjourned until 1:30, tomorrow afternoon.