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*Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA*

Wednesday

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The House met at 10 a.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Trimper):** Admit strangers, please.

Order, please!

**Orders of the Day**

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

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

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

I would call from the Order Paper, Order 3, third reading of Bill 3.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 3, An Act To Amend The Automobile Insurance Act, be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act To Amend The Automobile Insurance Act. (Bill 3)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Automobile Insurance Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 3)

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 4, third reading of Bill 6.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works, that Bill 6, An Act To Amend The Insurance Companies Act, be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

This motion is carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Insurance Companies Act. (Bill 6)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Insurance Companies Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 6)

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

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

We're just whipping through it here. I just wish the budget was that quick.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 5.

WHEREAS subsection 6(3) of the *Independent Appointments Commission Act* provides the members of the Independent Appointments Commission are to be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on a resolution of the House of Assembly; and

WHEREAS subsection 7(1) of the act states that a commissioner may be reappointed; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the following commissioners expires on May 25, 2019: Clyde K. Wells, Chairperson; Zita Cobb; Shannie Duff; Philip R. Earle; Derek Young; and

WHEREAS it is proposed that the said commissioners be reappointed as commissioners for a term of three years;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the following persons be appointed members of the Independent Appointments Commission for a term of three years: Clyde K. Wells, Chairperson; Zita Cobb; Shannie Duff; Philip R. Earle and Derek Young.

Mr. Speaker, as I speak to this motion, if I need a seconder, it would be the Minister of Natural Resources.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Who's always in her seat.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Who's always in her seat, always doing her work.

What I would say is that this is a fairly simple resolution. I'm not going to belabour the Independent Appointments Commission. I'd like to say that, if I recall correctly, that the formation of the IAC was our Bill 1, I think back in 2016, if I recall correctly. Although, I know that Members on the other side will certainly make some points about their thoughts on the process. What I can say is that I think that it's worked extremely well in encouraging applicants from all over this province to apply for positions.

People can talk about or debate the individuals, the choices, and that's fine, but in terms of the work that they've done, when you see people

from all over the province from bigger centres, smaller areas, female, male, different demographics, different backgrounds, that people feel encouraged to apply because they know that the application is going to an independent commission made up of these individuals who, again, the quality of these people is beyond reproach.

When you look at these five names – I have to tell you, just from anecdotally hearing about the work that they've done – this has not been a very easy appointment for these individuals. They have put in a significant amount of work over the last three years going through this process.

It was created brand new. It's something that did not exist before and then when you look at just the sheer number of agencies, boards and commissions that exist, when you look at the numbers of people applying, when you look at the screening processes and look at just reviewing these resumes. The fact is, it's been a tremendous amount of work and I want to thank these individuals for the work that they have put into this.

The motion today is to allow for these five individuals to be reappointed for a three-year term. We're so excited about this. I know that the Minister of Transportation and Works and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, I can just hear the conversation they're having about how excited they are about the quality of people like Clyde K. Wells and Zita Cobb and Philip R. Earle and Derek Young. They're excited about this, and so am I. I'm excited about this too.

That's what we need in this House, we need good vigorous debate across the floor of the House, because that is democracy.

Anyway, I digress. What I would say is I think that this is a motion that's going to be passed unanimously. I think it's something that we'll have some debate on the IAC. I know Members on the other side have their questions about it, and that's fine, but I'd like to think that the process has worked. I'd like to think that the process has been successful. I'd like to think that our agencies, boards and commissions have been populated by qualified people. The reason that

that is, is because we have these people doing that process and submitting names forward.

I want to thank them for their service. I want to thank them for the hours and days and weeks that they have put into this. None of these individuals are people that are sitting around with a huge amount of free time. Just look at these people and look at their résumés and look at their backgrounds. The fact is, they are doing this for the good of the province. So I want to thank them for their service. I know that we, as a government, thank them.

At this point, I'll take my seat. I may get another opportunity to speak to this resolution. I will turn it over to my colleagues to speak to this resolution regarding the reappointment of these five tremendous individuals.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Like the minister, I'll echo the same sentiments here that it's an honour to be able to speak about the reappointment of five very dedicated, very competent and very influential Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, particularly when they look at trying to improve the quality of boards and agencies when it comes to specific appointments.

We could have debate about the initial process and the discussion around the bill that was introduced. We cannot, and I refuse to argue about the quality of these people, because they're second to none. They're people who I've had the privilege to have worked with in different areas and different segments over my career, and found all to be very credible, very competent and very committed to improving the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

They were tasked with, at times, a very difficult undertaking to look at selecting who would be the best individual or group of individuals to fill positions in boards and agencies in Newfoundland and Labrador. Knowing that we

have an enormous amount of qualified and skilled individuals in our province, and outside our province, because it wasn't only restricted to here, and weighing the pros and cons to who would be the best to put forward. Their dedication – and the minister had noted, these are not people who sit home idly and are not engaged with other agencies or business endeavours, or organizational responsibilities. These are people who take that responsibility very seriously, but also take the responsibility they were asked and entrusted to do very responsible.

They have, as we've seen over the last number of years, put in play a number of very important people who've made a major change and a major impact in the agencies and boards they now sit on. In some cases they lead those boards. In some cases they're part of a team effort. Each one of the people selected have gone through a rigorous process where the Appointments Commission have looked at who they feel would be the best and then forwarded those names for selection and endorsement to those particular boards.

We've talked about trying to have a more open and engaged process. I must say, having these individuals have endeared to make that happen, and I've seen evidence that it has happened. I have no qualms in acknowledging the people they put forward are by far the best, through the process they've used, to determine who should best lead an organization or a particular entity there to be able to benefit the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I might add too; on another note, I did have a discussion with one member of the Commission at one point who encouraged me to reach out to the citizens that I know, regardless of political backgrounds, social backgrounds, to be cognizant of putting their names forward for particular boards that they felt they would be qualified for. Because this individual, like all the members of the Committee itself, felt the more engaged the general public are about what boards and agencies are there and the role they can play as part of that, the more beneficial it is to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. So making people aware that they have an opportunity to put their names forward for a position on one of the outstanding boards or

commissions is a benefit to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I was sort of taken back, but in a positive way, when I was approached at a civic meeting saying we've got a lot of people in but there are certain areas we don't have a lot of expertise, do you know people. He gave me some credit because of my background as a civil servant and in different levels of government, that there may be people in particular areas that I would be aware of who may not be aware that they could put their names forward to be considered for appointment.

I appreciated that, and I realized then that this just wasn't coming from this individual. That was the philosophy of all five members of the Commission itself. They were, no doubt, not only trying to select the right person but get the information out there so there would be a bigger pool of individuals to be able to choose from to ensure that we got the best person qualified to particularly take on the task that they would be entrusted with. So I saw that as a positive.

I suspect so many of my colleagues here in the House of Assembly did reach out to a number of people. As I looked at what boards and commissions were available, I said here's a particular agency that you may be interested in serving. In most cases it's from a volunteer point of view. In some cases there's some remuneration that may be of benefit to somebody who has to give up time in another agency or in their career or in their business, but to do something that would be beneficial to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So, I'd never disagree with the fact that we have a good process here and we have the right people making those decisions. I would have absolutely no qualms in being able to extend them for another three years knowing that we have qualified people committed to doing the best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; who've been through this process and have made it work and are now cognizant of not only continuing to do their job but trying to expand the scope by encouraging more people to put their names forward to be available to provide the services and the talents they have to better enhance the programs and services that we offer in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to note that we, in the Official Opposition, have ultimate respect for the individuals here. We want to congratulate them. We want to thank them for the work they've done. We obviously look forward to, once this is passed, of endorsing them to continue for the next three years in doing a very fluent, professional job to ensure the best people in Newfoundland and Labrador are doing the best jobs they can to ensure the best services are provided to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We will be supporting this, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

**MR. SPEAKER (Warr):** Thank you.

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

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

I would like to start by saying thank you to Clyde Wells, a former premier, who is the Chair of the Independent Appointments Commission; Zita Cobb, an incredible leader in her community who has done so much for the province and she's one of the heartbeats of our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador; Shannie Duff, again, an incredible leader with so much experience and wisdom; Philip Earle, again, a leader in commerce in our province; and, Derek Young. I would like to thank them on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for their service to the people.

I have spoken with a few of the commissioners on the Independent Appointments Commission and have thanked them personally. No one, I don't think anyone really anticipated the amount of work that was required of them because there was such a backlog in appointments to many of our agencies, boards and commissions. Some of the work that's required of people who are appointed to these positions also is an incredible workload. So I would like to thank them.

Would they have signed on if they had known how much work it would have been? The people who serve on the Independent Appointments Commission, I believe they would have, even knowing how much work it would have been.

Because these are people who are so incredibly, incredibly dedicated and committed to our province, to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would also like to thank Cathy Duke and Earle Ludlow, two folks who've just recently been appointed to the Commission. They have gone in with their eyes wide open knowing the work that has been done in the past few years by the current members. The work they do is so important.

Some of the agencies, boards and commissions may not seem as crucial as others, but they're all important in their own way. We are so incredibly lucky to have people of this calibre, people who love our province so much, willing to dedicate their time and their experience to ensuring that we have robust boards, robust – sometimes employees, sometimes volunteers on our agencies, boards and commissions. They comb the province looking for expertise, for people with passion and compassion, for people who are willing to give. It is not an easy task that the Independent Appointments Commission has been given but an important task.

I'd also like to thank the people in the Public Service Commission and the teams that work with them. Again, they're all part of making these important recommendations.

I'd also like to say, Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing – I have incredible regret on behalf of the people of the province that there isn't an imperative to look at gender and diversity in the makeup of our agencies, boards and commissions. Although, we do know there have been a number of women who've been appointed to some of these positions, and that's very important because there's such an imbalance.

We've had agencies, boards and commissions where there have been no women in some of these senior positions at all. So we have seen an improvement in that, but that's not legislated. I believe government missed the opportunity by not ensuring that not only gender but diversity be one of the important guidelines in assessing and analyzing, not only people who apply but the makeup of some of the agencies, boards and commissions, because that's really important.

When we look at any agency, board and commission we should be constantly, not just looking at who is there but who is not at the table. These are tables where decisions are made, whether it be our Liquor Board, whether it be some of the important ones around law, whether it be ones about health care. It's so important that we stop constantly and say: Who is not at the table?

Are there Indigenous people at the table? Are there newcomers at the table? Are there people who aren't wealthy and who do not have a whole lot of formalized education but an incredible amount of life skills and experience? Are there people from rural Newfoundland and Labrador? Are there women? Are there people who experience physical disabilities, who have some very important life experience to bring to the table again where decisions are made?

Are there people from the LGBTQ2-spirited community? We constantly have to look at who is not at the table, again because these are tables where important decisions are made – important decisions that affect the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and that affect our future as well.

The minister when he was speaking, when he was introducing this motion, was talking about good democracy. Well, good democracy is only good when we ensure that it is inclusive and that we have diversity at the table where decisions are being made. Without it, we don't have good democracy.

We've seen this over the years and – it's very similar to our Procurement Act, where government had the opportunity to enshrine in legislation around procurement that it would be inclusive, that we would look at the social benefits to ensure that there was gender and diversity. So, it is based solely on merit, but I would like to say that merit must include a diversity of life experience because those who may be in a minority group, experience life very, very differently than those of us who may be part of a majority group.

I believe that's a shortcoming of the way that this Independent Appointments Commission has been formulated. I believe that government still has the opportunity to do something about that,

that they can amend the legislation for our Independent Appointments Commission. I would hope that government would do that. That they would see fit to do that.

We need legislation that directs this Independent Appointments Commission to purposely consider gender and diversity in appointments, to purposely look at who is not at the table where decisions are being made. Otherwise, it leaves it solely to chance. All we have to do is look around in this House of Assembly and see that we have less than 25 per cent who are women. All we have to do is look at the portraits on the walls of Speakers. They are all men. There are no women and there is also no diversity.

So, Mr. Speaker, we can't leave it to chance. We are lucky that many of the appointments have also included women in the past while, but we can't base it on luck alone. There has to be weight behind legislation that directs the Independent Appointments Commission to look at gender and to look at diversity.

It's the only way we can make good, solid decisions if we have that diversity around the table where those decisions are made. Without it, we are impoverished. Why government wouldn't see that, why government wouldn't do that is beyond me. It would make the Independent Appointments Commission's directives more robust, more inclusive, always leading to better decision-making, to more inclusive decision-making, and we've seen that the world over. That's the direction that the United Nations has been going in in some of their appointments as well.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** They see the need for legislated directives for purposeful inclusion of gender and diversity.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm just going to take a couple of minutes to speak to this resolution, or motion, basically reappointing members of the Independent Appointments Commission for an additional three years. I'm not going to repeat everything that's been said about these individuals. Obviously, they're very qualified individuals; nobody could argue that. Like other Members, I want to thank these people for giving up their very valuable time to serve on this commission and to take on another three years, because I'm sure there are a lot of other things that these individuals could be doing with their time.

I know there are a lot of people that have been appointed to different agencies, boards and commissions. An awful lot has gone through this Independent Appointments Commission, and probably it's a much loftier task than perhaps these individuals thought from the beginning, because there were so many positions to fill. But from what I can see, at least, they've done a good job. The appointments that have been made, I certainly haven't had any issue with any of the people that they have selected. So I think they've done a good job, and I thank them for their service.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that outside of agencies, boards and commissions, I would like to see government consider at some point looking at other positions that do not fall within the category of agencies, boards and commissions, to see that also go through an independent process. Because certainly we've seen examples where individuals who perhaps had connections to various parties and so on – and I'm not just talking about this government, past governments as well. Some of the examples have been pretty blatant, actually, over the years, where people have been appointed to roles outside of agencies, boards and commissions that people would argue were absolutely 100 per cent political in nature.

I think that we would be doing a great service to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador if we were to expand the scope. If that meant expanding the number of members on the Independent Appointments Commission in order to accommodate that, so be it. But to be able to expand it so that persons in other government

positions, whether they be ADMs and so on, would also be merit-based, as opposed to political stripe and affiliation and so on. So that's something that I would like to see.

The other thing that I think is important to mention, I have mentioned this before, because it's been brought to my attention quite recently, actually, by one constituent, is while it's fine that we're trying to take politics out of appointments and so on, we still have a system that has been occurring for a long, long time – still exists today – with this whole idea of emergency hires and temporary positions and emergency hires within government where people don't have to go through the Public Service Commission, that they can be hired directly by the departments.

There are a lot of people who would argue that there are people that are getting in through the backdoor on these 10-week emergency hires, getting in through the backdoor because of who you know and politics and everything else, and once they get in as a temporary position, then they apply for permanent. Once you're in the door, then you can apply for permanent positions within the public service.

Sometimes people go in for 10 weeks, supposedly, or 13 weeks, I should say, and then they get extended and then they get extended again and they get extended again and so on. There are people who went into the system that have been there for years that have continued to be extended. So it's basically a backdoor way of hiring friends and connections of, whether it be people associated to political parties, or whether it be people who are friends of people that are managing departments and so on. So that is another loophole.

I'm sort of drifting a little from this, but it still is talking about people working for government. That is something that continues to happen. It's something that's been brought to my attention on a number of occasions, and, like I said, recently by a constituent of mine who was impacted by that. So it's something that government needs to consider. If we're going to have emergency hires, 13 weeks, that's what it's supposed to be for. If you know it's going to be extended, if you know it's going to be permanent positions, then make it permanent

positions. If you know it's going to be beyond 13 weeks, go to through the Public Service Commission like everybody else.

Other than that, Mr. Speaker, as I said, getting back to the intention of what we're doing here, I certainly have no problem whatsoever in supporting these individuals to be reappointed to the Independent Appointments Commission. I think that the Independent Appointments Commission was a good idea, albeit I know that it's been said – and it's legit – that they can select three names and the minister need not agree with any of them. They could just simply say, no, we don't want any of those people, I got someone I want. The minister could do that. I've heard that. That could legitimately happen under the Independent Appointments Commission, the way it works, and we wouldn't be any the wiser.

However, I will say this in defence of that argument, that I really believe – and I truly do believe this – that looking at the individuals on this list, and even the chair himself, I'm sure that if these people were taking the time, going through all this work, recommending people, and the government just decided to throw out the recommendations and do what they wanted anyway, I would say that this Independent Appointments Commission, they'd just all fold. They'd just leave en masse. They'd say goodbye, we're not going to be part of this. I know I wouldn't be part of it if that was happening.

So, while, technically, the loophole is there, I really don't believe that that's being used. I really believe that the people they are recommending are the people who are getting appointed to these positions. As I said, looking at the appointments that I've been aware of over the last number of years, three years or so since the IAC was created, I really don't have any problem with anything that I've seen. I think they've done a good job. I think the process has worked and, like I said, I'm glad to support these individuals moving forward for another three years; glad, actually, that they're willing to give up their time to do it because, as I said, I'm sure there are many other things that they could be doing with their time.

They're not getting any big – I don't think they're getting paid at all, actually. I could be



corrected. No, they're not getting paid at all. Maybe they get a per diem or something if they go to a meeting or whatever, some expenses, but they're not getting paid to do this.

These are all very capable people. They could be taking the time that they're doing this – because they're professional people – and making a heck of a lot of money. So in that sense, they're probably losing on the opportunity to make money to be doing this.

So, good on them for doing it and I support it 100 per cent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I'm happy to stand up and, I guess, conclude the resolution that's been entered. I appreciate what appears to be unanimous support from colleagues from both sides of the House. I think that speaks to the quality of the individuals that are being mentioned here.

I did appreciate the comments from my colleague from St. John's Centre when she talked about the new members that are coming in who, I think, also merit the same positive response as the five that are here.

I think this was a good debate in the sense that people can question the process. They have thoughts, concerns, issues, and that's good, but nobody questioned the individuals and the amount of work that they put in.

I will speak to the point brought up by the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, he mentioned the theoretical loophole. What I can say is two things. One, I do believe in the legislation there's a clause that states that if that happened there would have to be a report filed in the House, and that has not been done. So that confirms what your belief is, which that has not happened.

Again, while I don't have any proof of what the Member is saying in terms of would these

members stand for that? What I can say is I do share his sentiments in that these individuals give a significant amount of time and effort and if they believe that that work was not being heeded or listened to, then I'm sure they could find other endeavours that maybe take less time and pay more money.

They are doing this just out of their love for their province. They would all say that this province has given a lot to them. I can say that they've certainly given a lot to their province.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the support of this motion. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill or to build the IAC again and to speak to these five individuals. I want to thank them for their past service, for their current service and for their future service.

Thank you very much.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

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.'

The motion is carried.

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

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

I'd like to now call from the Order Paper, Motion 6, and I would move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources: WHEREAS section 3 of the *Citizens' Representative Act* provides that the Citizens' Representative is to be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on a resolution of the House of Assembly;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Mr. Bradley Moss is to be appointed at the Citizens' Representative effective May 1, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to stand up in support of this motion and this resolution, which will be debated by Members from all side of the House.

Perhaps the first thing I can do is talk a little bit about the Citizens' Representative, which is – some may know and some may not – an independent statutory office of this House, which means that, again, it's independent of government. It is not something that government tells these individuals what to do. We have a number of statutory offices. It's created by legislation and supported by the House of Assembly.

The best way for me to describe the Office of the Citizens' Representative is to refer directly to their website. They have a great website, very informative, and if you were look at it right under the What We Do section: "The Office of the Citizens' Representative provides a province-wide ombudsman service. It was opened in 2002 and is an independent office of the House of Assembly.

"The primary work of the Citizens' Representative is to accept complaints from citizens who feel they have been treated unfairly with respect to their contact with government offices and agencies. The Citizens' Representative and his staff will attempt to mediate citizens' complaints and if this is not possible, will undertake an impartial and unbiased investigation. If the complaint cannot be resolved through the investigation, an investigation report is generated and recommendations can be made to the House of Assembly.

"The Office ... can also undertake complaints that study how governmental policies, procedures, and actions can affect a large number of people. These are called systemic complaints and can result in recommendations that have a much broader impact than those flowing from individual complaints."

It goes on. It talks about who they can investigate, which is: the House or a committee; Cabinet; Executive Council; a court, judge or JP; an arbitrator; decisions under tribunals, something that the Child and Youth Advocate – a problem that they don't have the power to deal

with; government departments, and the list goes on.

If you look at the website, just right here it has the boards, agencies and commissions that can be investigated. It's a substantive list and quite comprehensive. For those that may be tuned in to this and may be, I guess, inquisitive of what the Citizens' Rep does, they have a great website that I would advise people to go and check out. It lays out who they are. The who, what, where, when and why, basically, is what they lay out.

So, this is an important office, and I guess before moving on to the purpose of this motion, which is to discuss the new Citizens' Representative to be voted on, I'd like to take just a moment to recognize and thank the current Citizens' Representative who is about to retire from this position after – I might get the time wrong, I think it's at least 12 years. He did two six-year terms, and, in fact, agreed to stay in the position while this process was underway. And it was a rigorous process that was undertaken by the Public Service Commission to ensure that these names came forward.

Barry Fleming, QC, has a wonderful resume and someone who's been doing this job. I've had an opportunity to chat with him back when I was in Opposition, while I was in government, about the work he's done. In fact, the department in which I am now part of is a department that he's had an opportunity to do work on. Because I would suggest that the main source of complaints that the Citizens' Representative receives is actually from the district, I think, formally known as Signal Hill - Quidi Vidi, but Her Majesty's Penitentiary.

Every year there's a report comes out and lists the complaints, list the district, the number of complaints. That district, you'll see, it looks startling the first time you see it, the sheer number of complaints that come. So, again, I've spoken to him, and a lot of complaints about systemic issues within Justice, within Corrections. And that's one of the things we have discussed.

I want to thank Mr. Fleming, QC, for his service. I'm sure he's not retiring from work. He still has a lot to give, I think, and I'm sure there are a lot of organizations and people that would love to

have the opportunity to have him and his service. But, I can tell you, this House of Assembly should be thankful for the work he has done for this province over the last – over the decade.

So, I want to thank Mr. Fleming. What I can say is that the new individual, Mr. Bradley Moss, spoke very highly of Mr. Fleming during this process in his application. He speaks quite highly of Mr. Fleming, which I think is a testament to the relationships. Why the Citizens' Representative Office works well is because, obviously, there's a very congenial relationship there between co-workers, and when you have someone speaking highly of the person they're following, I think it speaks well to both of them. So I want to thank him.

Now, moving forward. Again, we'll have an opportunity – Members on the other side will have a chance to speak to this, and I'll have an opportunity to speak again at the conclusion of this.

The name we are putting forward is Mr. Bradley J. Moss, who is a resident of the area. I think the big thing when you look at Mr. Moss' résumé, I think the big thing that stands out is since 2008 he has been the Assistant Citizens' Representative. So this is an individual that brings over a decade of experience in the very field in which he is hoping to be promoted. I think that speaks to – in any organization, some continuity or institutional knowledge is a good thing. I look at, just when you look at a government department and when new people come in. That's why it's been so important.

I just look at mine where we've had this continuity of knowledge that you always want to maintain as departments evolve and grow and mature. This is the same thing with this office. This is an important office and they've got a great staff. Having that amount of experience and background I think will serve Mr. Moss well, will serve the office well, will serve this House well, and will serve people in this province well.

It is an important job to take. When you read the description that I listed out here talking about citizens who feel they have been treated unfairly, I can tell you, that's something that all

of us as Members have experience in, is hearing from constituents and citizens who feel they have been treated unfairly. And sometimes – I can say, this is just my own experience. Sometimes it's not about the validation or the confirmation of an unfairness happening. Sometimes it's feeling that they have been listened to, that they have been heard. So in this case I think that office is important.

In some cases the complaint is not founded, but it's knowing that the complaint is listened to and looked in to. That is important I think to people as well. Again, it doesn't apply to everybody, but just listening to some of my constituents when they talk about various issues, to say, look, I know that maybe nothing can be done. I know maybe this cannot be fixed, but I appreciate the fact that I had an opportunity for somebody to listen to me. I think we all can say that for ourselves, we want to feel listened to. So, certainly I think this gentleman, Mr. Moss, brings with him an ability to listen.

When you look at the other things that come with his skill set that will be important, the fact is he has the experience and objectively, an independently mediating and formally investigating and reporting on thousands of individual citizen complaints; experience in MHA and Cabinet referrals; investigations under the two provincial public interest disclosure programs; policy development, systemic investigations, public education and annual reporting.

Annual reporting is an important thing, because every year there is a report tabled in this House outlining what the Citizens' Representative has done. I can tell you that I read every single one of them because I think – and, again, I hope this continues. I enjoy the case descriptions that Mr. Fleming and his team have put out there which often make these topics more interesting to read, because it's something that we want.

We want to read these. We want to know what's going on, especially – again, it doesn't just have to relate to a department or something I'm familiar with. I read all of them because I think it's good to see what's going on. In terms of what the complaint is, was there something that could be fixed? In some cases it doesn't take much to fix the issue. It might take a

conversation, it might take a directive, who knows. There are a range of things that can happen.

That's the other thing that I think Mr. Moss and his team will bring is an ability to look at investigations and know there are a range of measures and that it's not a blunt force that needs to be applied in every case. Sometimes there's a deafness, there's a complexity and there has to be an ability to look at each one and figure out, how do we approach this situation?

The fact the recognition stated here in the – I guess the *Citizen's Representative Act*, when we talk about the fact that I might have a complaint and it's fine and dandy for me to bring that forward individually, but you might have the same complaint and my friend might have the same complaint, then it becomes a systemic complaint. The fact is when we look at systemic issues within our society, within our democracy, within our departments, within government, these are some things that if more than one person is feeling the issue, then we should have a look at that.

I think this individual is going to bring the skill set necessary to continue the great work of the Citizens' Representative. I think it's someone that we will all have trust in, knowing that this work is going to get done, and all the people that we represent should have trust and faith in them.

I will point out, it's my understanding that this appointment comes with a six-year term, which I think is important to note. It's six years and has the ability to be reappointed after the conclusion of six years. This would take effect on May 1, if it were to become successful.

Having spoken to Mr. Moss, I can tell you I have full faith in his ability to come in and take what is an office that is working well and continue that. Nobody wants to see a disruption there, especially when you have a change at the top of somebody who has been doing the job so long, and that's why I have faith in this individual.

Now, what I can say through this process is I want to thank all those individuals that expressed their interest in this position. I have to tell you it gives one hope knowing that there are

individuals out there, multiple individuals with amazing skill sets, with backgrounds, with experience that were looking to do this job. It gives you hope knowing that there's a level of qualified, capable, talented people, with a desire to do this work. That was what makes it tough. But, I can tell you, just knowing that I think is a positive thing and I want to thank those individuals.

We have a lot of talented people in this province, both within government and out in the private sector. Knowing that these people want to give their talents to the citizens surrounding them, I think it says something good about this province and about the direction that we are going in.

On that note, I will say that just going back to Mr. Moss – and actually, I misspoke earlier. He's been the Assistant Citizen's Rep since 2008, but actually worked as a senior investigator in that office starting in 2006. So, he's actually got more experience in that office.

To go backwards, 2002 to 2006, he was actually investigator and research specialist and, before that, actually worked in a law firm in this city. So, when you look at the background, the education here, this is someone who has given the majority of their professional career to this work, and I think that speaks to the experience that's necessary to do a good job.

I can speak on behalf of my colleagues here that we will be wholeheartedly supporting this. Pending a successful vote on this resolution, we want to wish our best to Mr. Moss as he takes this position on May 1.

At that point right now, I guess I would take my seat and allow my colleagues to speak to this resolution.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

It's indeed an honour to stand as we talk about the new appointment for the new Citizens' Rep. But before we talk about the new appointment I, like the minister, want to echo the great acknowledgement of the former, or, I guess, the still present Citizens' Representative who will finish in the next coming weeks, Mr. Barry Fleming.

I've had the privilege over the last number of years of working with him on a couple of situations relevant to my constituents, and found him to be extremely professional, extremely engaging, extremely sympathetic. Every constituent that I've referred to him have always come back and said he was very open and very honest and very professional. His office is run professionally, all the staff there.

That's a testament to him to as the leader, and a testament to his commitment to ensuring that people who may need advice, who may need someone to advocate on their behalf, who may feel that there's nowhere else to turn to get some guidance can engage those individuals, work with them, hopefully find solutions; but, in some cases, acknowledge that the process has been followed and has been followed professionally, and here are the outcomes.

So I found Mr. Fleming to embody all the positive things that you would want for someone to be a representative for people who may have some challenges when it comes to feeling that they're getting justice in our society. So to him, on behalf of the Official Opposition, we want to say congratulations on your retirement, wish him well in the future, but thank you for his dedication to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and his professionalism in ensuring that people had a representative who would speak on their behalf and ensure no stone was unturned so they could indeed have the best quality of services that they were entitled to.

We all want to acknowledge him being able to do that and provide that service. I do get to see him regularly in a social setting and get to see his professional side and his social side, but the fact that he still has a good spirit, he's a very caring individual and very competent in everything he does.

As we move forward on this motion now, and we've talked earlier about the Appointments Commission and the process here, I also want to note and echo what the minister had said. You want to thank everybody who showed an interest in this position, because it's a unique position and it's a unique skill set that you would need to be able to fill that particular mandate, and ensure that the services you're providing are in line with the expectation of the clientele that are going to be coming to you for those services.

You've got to be cognizant of the fact you're going to hear all kinds of scenarios, you're going to probably see some stuff that is heart-wrenching, but you have to keep an objective, open mind. You've got to be open to the investigative processes that best fit the ability and the need to get the information that's relevant so that decisions can be made, recommendations can be made.

Contrary to popular belief, we receive a multitude of reports weekly, monthly, particularly yearly, from different agencies and organizations, a number within the province, some outside. I would note the Citizens' Rep's report is one that I take and I do read more diligently than I do in some other ones. Unfortunately, I'm not a big catcher of reading long documents. I want to get to the executive summary to get an understanding, but I do admit the reports that the former Citizens' Rep had sent are very explicit, they're to the point, they outline the work that's been done, what they've been engaged in, their recommendations as part of their process, so I found that to be engaging, getting an understanding of the role and responsibility that they play to service the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and, in some cases, the unique situations that citizens of our province find themselves in that they do need an advocate.

In this case, the Citizens' Rep can go do some investigative work, can sit and outline the concerns of individuals and, in a number of cases, make some recommendations of what should be done to address the particular challenge or issue that a person is facing.

So, the office itself, as we know, has been very professionally run. It serves an extremely positive and necessary service. We've had, at the

helm, a very competent, professional, accepted leader. I'm now very confident to say that the next stage and the next phase of the Citizens' Rep's office will have the same level of professionalism, dedication and commitment. We have that in the notice of the individual who has been recommended and put forward for our discussion and acknowledgement here and passing in this House of Assembly, and that being Mr. Bradley Moss.

As the minister outlined, his resume speaks for itself. Nearly two decades of being dedicated to work, particularly around servicing people, particularly around doing proper research, proper investigation and to being able to represent people at this level. Keeping in mind he'd worked in the office, has been the Deputy Citizens' Rep so has a full understanding of the roles and responsibilities and, potentially, any necessary changes on a go-forward basis as society changes and some of the nuances and some of the challenges that may be put forward, because he's seen what's gone on in the past, what's worked, probably what's gone on in the past and hasn't worked, what's presently working and what may need to be addressed in the future, and that could be around technology, it could be around the scope of the jurisdiction or the investigations that the Citizens' Rep's division and its office may take into account. Having that expertise there is very important.

Now, that doesn't diminish from all the other candidates who put their name forward, their expertise and their specialities and what they could bring to the office itself, but I'm confident that the decision made here was the right one. He will obviously keep the same level of professionalism we always had, the credibility there and address any new changes that may be necessary to keep the flow of the respect and the access that the citizens would have to ensure that the Citizens' Rep can represent them in the proper manner.

I'm fortunate enough that Mr. Moss is from my district. I've personally known him for the last six or seven years. I've known him from a leadership point of view in a number of not-for-profit, community-based organizations that he's a leader in. That itself speaks volumes as to his professionalism, his capabilities and his commitment to the community, which is the

same I know he reflects to his job and to this province.

When I heard that he was interested in this position, I saw that as a positive, and knowing he had been working in the office that he would be a great fit. The fact that he's been selected, obviously, to me, just dictates people saw the same things that I've seen in him in the last six or seven years about leadership, dedication, professionalism. No doubt they saw it in his job performance as the deputy or the Citizens' Rep within the office itself.

I've seen him from a volunteer basis take time off work at his own cost and travel to some of the less advantaged countries to help out and partner with organizations like Team Broken Earth and go down on a volunteer basis to help service people from a medical point of view. That's, again, a testament to him as an individual, but also about his understanding of the needs of individuals.

When you take that personal philosophy, it's no doubt it can only be a positive and another asset when you're putting somebody in a position as a Citizens' Rep to represent people and do proper due diligence in an investigative manner, to get to the root of whatever an issue may be and to be able to support an individual in moving whatever the scenario may be forward.

Mr. Moss is very active in the community. His children, he's instilled, him and his wife, into them, they're very active in the community, very socially conscious and very open to ensure justice is done. That's what I see as the Citizens' Rep's responsibility. It's about proactively ensuring that justice is available for all. It comes in different forms. While it's not directly in our legal system, it is attached because it's about proper investigations, it's about representation, it's about weighing the evidence, and then it's about making a statement through recommendations and a report as to what has occurred, what should've happened, what was the causes, if there indeed is an alternative to approach this and what should be the positive outcome.

So, we've got three key things going here. We've got the former Citizens' Rep who's leaving, who's added great credibility, has put in

play a very stable organization that has been accepted and noted within the communities. We now have a new Citizens' Rep who will come in, who'll take over, who's very competent and very professional in the same manner, who no doubt was mentored by the former Citizens' Rep, but has an experienced background, particularly in that office.

So, the transition time is very minimal or non-existent when it comes to being able to ensure that continuity moves forward and that there's no downtime in the scope of work that's being done and the professionalism that's necessary there. Again, from his personal background, knowing him, he adds another dimension. He adds sympathy, he adds empathy, he adds compassion, but he adds all of that in a professional manner.

Mr. Speaker, we here in the Opposition, and me personally, wholeheartedly support the endorsement and the motion put forward that Mr. Bradley Moss would be appointed as the Citizens' Rep, taking his office May 1 of this year and continuing for the next six years and, hopefully, from there on, for another term as the Citizens' Rep.

On that note I'll sit, and thank, once again, Mr. Fleming, but also congratulate Mr. Moss.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

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

I'm pleased to stand this morning and speak to this motion to put in place Mr. Bradley Moss as the new Citizens' Representative beginning on May 1 of this year.

As the House Leader did, and as my colleague for Conception Bay East - Bell Island did, I would like first to thank Mr. Barry Fleming for the wonderful job that he's done since 2006. Sort of a coincidence to note that I came into this House in November 2006; I think he became Citizens' Representative in December of

2006. So we've been around together the same time and are retiring from this House of Assembly, and from his position, at the same time.

I can certainly speak to the work of Mr. Barry Fleming, and have always been immensely impressed with his knowledge, with his compassion, with his ability to listen and with the leadership that he gave in the Citizens' Rep's office.

As a Member of the Management Commission, over the years, of course, besides dealing with various offices and agencies of the government as an MHA, we also get to deal with the Officers when it comes to budget time, for example, and we get to talk to, and got to talk to Mr. Fleming at least once a year with regard to the budget. That meant talking about the programming and how things were going inside of his office. So I feel that I did get to know Mr. Fleming.

There were times over those years that Mr. Moss came with Mr. Fleming to the meeting, so I certainly got to have a sense of him, as well. I feel very good, actually, that the person replacing Mr. Fleming will be somebody who works side by side with him, and I have confidence would continue the kind of values and principles that were obvious in Mr. Fleming.

I'm particularly interested and happy because of work that we've done recently on the Privileges and Elections Committee. I know we're not talking about that work specifically, but one of the things that the Citizens' Rep office does is take the responsibility for the whistle-blower piece of the act of the House of Assembly integrity and accountability act. In that, there is a whole section on whistle-blowing, and it is the Citizens' Rep who has the responsibility for investigating whenever a whistle-blower comes to him under the act that governs us here in the House of Assembly.

It is because the Citizens' Rep office has that responsibility, and because it has that experience, which is a very important experience and very important responsibility to listen to whistle-blowers, that when we in the Privileges and Elections Committee were looking at the harassment-free workplace specific to the Legislature, and we looked at what department

or who or where should responsibility for investigations into complaints under a policy that we were putting together, it was logical to look at the Citizens' Representative's office.

Number one, because they already understand very well the responsibilities of MHAs under our act and because they do the investigations under the whistle-blower legislation, they have tremendous experience in dealing with the confidential nature of complaints and dealing with the complexity of complaints against MHAs, for example, and MHAs to MHAs, or MHAs with staff. So they certainly have an experience that's extremely important to another piece of work that I've been involved with in this House, and it has been a privilege, actually, for me to have been involved with that piece of work.

I have great confidence that Bradley Moss, because of his years of experience, over 10 years of experience working with Barry Fleming, and because of his understanding of the whistle-blower legislation and their responsibility already to deal with complaints of that nature, that I feel confident that he will ensure that our confidence in the Citizens' Rep's office will be well founded when it comes to – which we've done – recommending to this House that the Citizens' Rep be the office that deals with complaints under the policy that the Committee has recommended.

Unfortunately, we have not dealt with that resolution yet in this House. If things go the way it seems they may be going today, I probably won't be around for the final discussion. But I have absolutely no doubt in mind, and especially with Mr. Moss moving into this position, that we have been wise in recommending that complaints under the policy that we're recommending in the Privileges and Elections Committee should be dealt with under the Citizens' Representative's office.

So, having said that, I'm delighted that – I have no idea, of course, who else applied for the position, and I'm sure they all were good applicants, but I have no doubt that the choice of Mr. Moss as the person who's worked closely with Barry Fleming for over 10 years, as the person who has been so intimately involved with the work of the Office of the Citizens' Rep,

should now be the person who heads it. I wish him and the staff all the best, as I also wish Mr. Fleming a good retirement in whatever he chooses to do.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

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

I am just going to take a couple of moments to speak to this motion. This one here is about appointing a new Citizens' Rep. I'm not going to get into all the details that everyone else has gotten into, but I do want to reiterate the point to thank Mr. Fleming for his years of service in that position. I think that, from my observations at least, it seems to me that he did a really good job, and I thank him for that. I wish him the best in his retirement or whatever he should endeavour to do after this.

The individual, Mr. Moss, who is being recommended here for this position – first of all, I would say that the position would've went through the Independent Appointments Commission. We already talked about that resolution, and the individuals being reappointed there. So I guess in line with the fact that we've all felt that we have the utmost confidence in the individuals on the Independent Appointments Commission, then obviously we would have the utmost confidence in this recommendation.

I don't know Mr. Moss, but listening to the Government House Leader, the Minister of Justice, reading out some of his résumé, it would certainly seem to me that he is absolutely qualified to do the position. As has been said, he served as the Assistant Citizens' Representative, if you will. I'm not sure if it was assistant or deputy, whatever it's called, but 2i/c, we'll say, to the Citizens' Rep for a number of years. He has, sounds like, extensive background in doing investigations and so on. He's a lawyer. So again, it would seem to me, not knowing the man personally, not interviewing him, not seeing his full résumé, it would seem to me that he's



definitely the right person for the job and I'll obviously be supporting it.

I think it's important to note the importance of this office to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have a number of statutory positions, officers, that report to the House of Assembly, whether it be the Auditor General, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, who's also the Chief Electoral Officer, the Child and Youth Advocate and of course the Citizens' Rep. This office does perform a very significant role, very important role for the people. And I've actually had the occasion to refer a number of people to the Citizens' Rep, because a lot of times what happens, of course, is you might get a constituent that comes to you with an issue where they felt they were treated unjustly or unfairly by government officials, whether it be in dealing with an agency, board, commission, or whether it be dealing with core government itself.

Sometimes the issues they may raise may be around how they were treated. Sometimes the issues raised may be around how the individual they were dealing with, or the department they were dealing with, how they dealt with a certain matter. It could be the fact that they felt that things were delayed beyond what would be considered reasonable. It could be an issue around interpretation of legislation or interpretation of government policy, if you will. It could be around the fact that they felt the policy itself was unjust. I've certainly had situations, as I said, where I've referred people to the Citizens' Rep, not necessarily because the department that they were dealing with wasn't doing their job, I'll say, but it could be because they're working within the confines of policies which arguably, in itself, were unjust policies.

We look no further to the change that was announced yesterday, for example, with children and the clawback, children whose families are on income support. If someone was receiving alimony, maintenance, whatever, for that child, that was being counted as income against receiving income support. That was a policy of government, if you will, that they were doing that. Nobody in the department was necessarily doing anything wrong, they were only following the policies that existed, but it was an unfair, was an unjust policy, and that ended up going

through a third party. I can't remember if it was the Citizens' Rep or if it was the Child and Youth Advocate's office; it was one or the other. It was the Child and Youth Advocate.

I'm actually very familiar with that particular case that led to this actually happening, because I spoke to that family. That was the Child and Youth Advocate. They had exhausted the avenues available through the government department, the individuals were simply following the policies as they existed, and by being able to go through the Child and Youth Advocate, who could do an investigation and make recommendations to the department to say, listen, guys, this is an oversight, or this is something that maybe you never thought of. This policy is just simply unfair, unjust, it needs to be changed. To government's credit, they changed it. That was the Child and Youth Advocate.

The same thing happens on a continuous basis with the Citizens' Rep. As I said, I have put in complaints on behalf, I've guided constituents and people to the Citizens' Rep's office. I've actually assisted constituents with filing complaints to the Citizens' Rep office on any number of issues, whereby you took the issue that you had to the department, to the board, to the agency and you exhausted all attempts to get it resolved.

Sometimes you may go to the minister's office and still didn't work out. Sometimes it could be an appeal process, it still didn't work out. If, at the end of the day, after you've done all that and you felt that the decision was unjust or the policy itself was an unjust policy, then you always have that avenue. That independent avenue to go to where this government policy could be investigated and recommendations made to government, that maybe you may want to have a look at this and change this, because there's no justice in what's being done here.

Like I said, it's a very, very important avenue for citizens to have to be able to go to this statutory office, this independent office. Obviously, then because of that, it's critical that the individuals in that office – because there's obviously not – when we talk about Citizens' Rep, it's not just – yes, the Citizens' Rep is one person, but they obviously have a staff,

investigators and other people who support the office.

It's important to have a Citizens' Rep office that is responsive, that is qualified and that is competent in doing the work. Obviously, that starts at the top with the leadership being the Citizens' Rep, him or herself.

In this case, as I said, it's gone through the IAC. There were a number of applicants. This particular gentleman, by virtue of his qualifications, by virtue of his experience in that actual office for a number of years, it was determined that he was the best fit for the job.

I certainly wish him all the best and I certainly look forward to – I want to say I look forward to working with him. I hope I don't, in a sense, because I hope I don't have any problems that I need to go to him, but should I need to go to him on behalf of a constituent in the future, I'm glad that we'll have a good person there to do that. I would look forward to working with him at that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I want to thank my colleagues for their support of this resolution and support of the naming of Mr. Bradley Moss as the new Citizens' Representative.

I won't belabour the point. I think we know that we have a qualified, capable, competent, experienced individual that's going to fill this important role. He has big shoes to fill but we're quite confident that Mr. Moss is going to hit the ground running and continue to do great work on behalf of that office for the people of this province.

We look forward to his appointment, which is effective May 1. We thank Mr. Fleming Q.C., for his work over the years.

On that note, I will take my seat to allow for the vote on the resolution.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

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.'

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

At this time, I would suggest that we recess until 2 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It's been suggested that we recess until 2 p.m. this afternoon, today being Private Members' Day.

This House now stands in recess.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Trimper):** Admit strangers, please.

Order, please!

I'd like to welcome the Members back for the afternoon part of this day's sitting.

### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Ferryland, Placentia West - Bellevue, and Mount Pearl - Southlands.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in the hon. House today to congratulate a constituent of mine from the district on receiving the Canada 150 Local Heroes Award. Michelle O'Keefe, from Tors Cove, received her Canada 150 Local Heroes award on Monday, December 17, at the Star of the Sea Hall in the Town of Holyrood, at the Local Heroes Award Ceremony.

Michelle was awarded a Senate of Canada 150th Anniversary Medal for her significant contribution to her community. Michelle has played a leadership role in her community and, as well, in the surrounding region. She serves and has served on many different committees and groups in the region such as the Bay Bulls to Bauline Athletic Association, the Tors Cove Hall Committee, and many other committees and events she's been involved with.

Michelle's contribution of her time and dedication has played a major role in bringing the community of Tors Cove and the surrounding area together. She has taken great pride in her community and shows a great pride in everything she does and is involved with.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating Michelle O'Keefe on receipt of the Canada 150 Local Heroes Award.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. BROWNE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize excellence in a field where success is often dependent on your tenacity, drive and determination to match your clients' needs.

Real estate is said to be a challenging business. It takes a tough but special character to make a successful agent. It takes a willingness to work days, evenings, weekends and holidays.

Such is the case for Darlene Bennett of Marystown, who was just recently named the number one realtor in Canada for 3% Realty for the first quarter of 2019. In 2015, she was named

a Platinum Award winner, and Executive Award winner in 2016, '17 and '18.

Darlene has been selling homes in and around Marystown and on the Burin Peninsula since 2012, having sold over 160 listings. She is known as someone who gets the job done. In a competitive business, receiving this distinction as the top in Canada is no easy feat. It is a testament to Darlene's work ethic and genuine desire to help her clients that makes this recognition possible.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join with me in congratulating Darlene Bennett on being named the Top Realtor in Canada, and in recognizing her business acumen for many, many more years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It is my privilege to rise in this hon. House to offer congratulations to a group of individuals who have made a significant contribution to sport in my community.

Once again, this year's Mount Pearl Athletic Awards was a tremendous success, which highlighted the achievements and emphasized the important role that sport has played and continues to play in the development of youth and adults alike within our great city.

There were a number of very worthy nominees again this year nominated in five categories. Congratulations to this year's winners: Coach of the Year, Margaret "Muggs" Tibbo of Pearlgate Track and Field; Peter Halliday, Executive of the Year award winner; Perry Dalton of Mount Pearl/Paradise Skating Club; Female Athlete of the Year, Chantal Barnes of Pearlgate Track and Field; Male Athlete of the Year, Terry Ryan Jr. for his accomplishments in ice and ball hockey;

and, Team of the Year, the 2017-2018 Mark's Mount Pearl Junior Blades hockey team.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating these individuals on this significant accomplishment and wish them all the very best in their future sporting endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to highlight our continued commitment to seniors through *Budget 2019*.

As our population continues to age, we are creating new ways to ensure that residents can continue to be full and active participants in their communities.

That's why our government has allocated \$270,000 in *Budget 2019* for the new Social Inclusion Initiative.

This funding will provide 50-Plus clubs with grants of up to \$2,000. This money is to be used for initiatives that help seniors participate in community events and other activities that support healthy aging, and promote mental health and well-being.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to assure our seniors that we have heard their concerns about how the Muskrat Falls Project could cause their electricity bills to increase substantially, and that is one of the reasons we introduced our rate mitigation framework earlier this week.

This plan will protect all residents, but most importantly, people who have low or fixed incomes, from increases to electricity rates and taxes that would affect the cost of living as a result of the Muskrat Falls Project.

These actions are in addition to the many steps we've already taken to ensure seniors have the supports and services they need to age with dignity while continuing to be active and healthy contributors to their communities.

For example, through *Budget 2019* we will continue to provide the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit, which provides up to \$1,313 annually to adults aged 65 years and older. We also continue to provide the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement – an annual financial commitment that helps individuals living with low income to better meet their needs. Combined, these programs provide \$123 million to individuals with low income.

Mr. Speaker, just last month we awarded \$300,000 through the new Community Transportation Grants Program and I'm pleased to say this program will continue in *Budget 2019*. While the program addresses barriers to accessible transportation for many different sectors of our society, seniors will certainly benefit in a significant way.

Our government will also continue to invest \$95,000 annually for the Age-Friendly Communities Program. Municipalities like Cormack, Gambo, Grand Falls-Windsor, Isle aux Morts, New-West-Valley, Placentia, St. Lawrence and Summerford are also some of the most recent to take advantage of this funding to undertake assessments and develop initiatives to help make their communities more age-friendly.

Mr. Speaker, we have been able to accomplish all of this through our strong collaborations with a number of valued community partners. I extend my sincere appreciation to the Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors, Seniors NL, the Newfoundland and Labrador 50-Plus Federation and the Seniors Coalition.

We look forward to continuing to work with them, and of course with the Office of the

Seniors' Advocate, led by Dr. Suzanne Brake, who was appointed in 2017.

We all appreciate how the seniors of our province have shaped this place we call home, and we welcome their continued contributions in our communities.

I call on all of my colleagues and all the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to show their support for the seniors of our province.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise, and you have two minutes, Sir.

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

I'd like to thank the Member opposite for an advance copy of her statement. I think we all recognize the importance and the contributions of our 50-plus clubs and our other age-friendly programs and organizations. In my own district alone, I had the opportunity to attend many of the events of our seniors' programs and their functions and I've witnessed first-hand the support, the fellowship, the societal value of supporting our seniors.

It is true that those on fixed and low incomes are impacted by the cost of living, and many seniors continue to voice their concerns over the excessive taxation, the lack of accessible transportation and obtaining dignified treatment in the long-term care facilities. It is unfortunate that in *Budget 2019* the government has not addressed changes in personal care home assessments, which has negatively impacted so many seniors and their families in this province. My office also continues to receive calls from seniors struggling to get enough home care hours to meet their basic needs.

Government must do more to address these very real needs of seniors who have contributed to our society for a lifetime. They are not looking for a handout but rather a hand up, and I will thank Dr. Suzanne Brake. Yesterday, she gave me a nice update on the work she's doing and I see that's moving ahead. I look forward to the final report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Sir.

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister. We have the highest percentage of seniors on OAS and GIS, more and more seniors are having to use the food banks – the minister knows that.

Today, a senior in distress called me saying: Why didn't the government reinstate the Adult Dental Program for seniors? I asked the same question. Our seniors cannot afford dental care, which is crucial to their health – the minister knows that. Every day I get seniors calling me, desperate for affordable and safe housing. Many are couch-surfing – the minister knows that.

Why didn't government increase the number of rent supps for seniors? The Seniors' Benefit hasn't been raised since 2016, yet inflation has – the minister knows that. The ceiling for eligibility for the 65Plus drug program is too low; many seniors cannot afford their medications – the minister knows that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

I rise in this hon. House to announce that a new mobile crisis response team has been established, along with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, in Corner Brook, and will be operational later this month.

The team includes a mental health worker and a police officer who will work together to respond to people in crisis.

Once implemented, the Corner Brook team can be reached seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., by calling either 911 or the 24-hour Provincial Mental Health Crisis Line at 1-888-737-4668.

This team is similar to those already in place in St. John's and Labrador West – which, to date, have responded to over 1,800 calls for service.

*Budget 2019 – Working towards a brighter future* includes \$914,000 to launch the Corner Brook team, and to establish teams in Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor this summer, through a further partnership with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Another mobile crisis response team will be established this year in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

Since the release of *Towards Recovery: The Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*, we are removing barriers to treatment, making it easier to access supports, changing how services are delivered and working toward eliminating the stigma associated with addiction and mental illness. Working closely with people with lived experience and their families, our community partners and the regional health authorities, we are making sure people get the appropriate treatment when and where they need it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear of the new mobile crisis response team that will be established in Corner Brook.

Mental health and addictions issues have touched the families of everyone in this province, and people in crisis require additional supports and care. Providing these additional supports is an important way to combat the stigma and reduce harm in our communities.

Let's work together in a collaborative way to provide the needed supports the citizens of our province need and deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister. We are seeing many significant improvements to our mental health and addictions services, and I want to thank all those advocates and activists who took part in the process to help me push and call for the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. It is this kind of civil society action that can result in systemic change.

I also want to thank the staff of the Department of Health and Community Services, especially Colleen Simms and her amazing team, who have been tasked with the implementation of *Towards Recovery*, and all the front-line workers, both in the public sector and the non-profit sector. There is still much more to do, but to all those involved, bravo.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

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

Yesterday, on the eve of an election, the government announced that it reported a \$1.92-billion surplus. We all agree this surplus is only a paper surplus because of accounting rules.

I ask the Premier: Did he pick April 1 to puff up the financial position of the province in an election year?

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

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

Well, it would not matter what date we picked. If you had read the information that has been back and forth, many of us would have said that this would be done by March 31. Everyone was saying that, however, except for the Leader of the Opposition, except for the Leader of the PC Party, because he was out telling people that we could not get this done.

So, Mr. Speaker, what he refers to as a paper surplus, like the Minister of Finance said yesterday, we would've much preferred that this guaranteed revenue stream would've been actually allocated over a period of years. But it was the people in the Department of Finance and people that know this, they know the rules – I'm surprised that the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the PC Party, would not know these rules or have not checked them out, or today he's just playing politics. These are the accounting rules that we had to abide by, regardless of the date when this transfer was made.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, the Board of Trade observed yesterday that the accounting technique the Premier mentions has a danger of creating a misperception in the public that we're actually in a better fiscal situation than we are.

I ask the Premier: Does he expect to return to balance if the budget misleads the public as to our true fiscal picture?

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

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

One of the things that we've done when we inherited the finances of this province in 2015 is

we made a commitment that we would never do what the previous administration did, Mr. Speaker. They did not put out a mid-year update; they did not provide an update on Muskrat Falls.

We, in 2016, the following year, brought in legislation to change that. That happened in this House of Assembly so the people of this province would never have to go through that again. That is one of the messes, or one of the mistakes that we've had to fix up because of the work of the prior administration.

These are the rules, Mr. Speaker, of public accounting. This is accrual accounting. The budget is there, and this province will return to surplus in 2022-23, just like we said way back in 2016.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** I'd ask the hon. Premier to explain to the House how is it he expects the public to accept that we will return to balance, or surplus, when he projects running major deficits for the next two years.

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, that's all laid out in our forecast. All this information is available. I will tell you too, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition made comments outside of this House that were not factual; they were not truthful, Mr. Speaker. The comment about having another budget ready is not at all true. Shame on the Leader of the Opposition for making that suggestion.

Mr. Speaker, what I do agree with him, however, is the fact that he mentioned that we would back in this House as government. I do agree with that – that we would pass the budget.

Mr. Speaker, this indeed is the budget that we will pass on re-election to this government. We have put in place a fiscal framework that we will meet. This province will be back to surplus in 2022-23. This province is already in a better place than we inherited in 2015.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** The Premier well knows that his budget has increased spending in this coming year by \$183 million. The Employers' Council has said that if spending money you don't have is how you get re-elected, we are never going to get out of our situation.

I ask the Premier if spending money we don't have is more important than the future of our young people.

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what is important about the future of this province is a government here that has a plan to fix the mistakes of the previous PC administration. Nearly 30 per cent of the net debt in this province, Mr. Speaker, guess where it's going? Nearly 30 per cent to Muskrat Falls – nearly 30 per cent of the net debt in this province as a result of the mistakes, the miscalculations, the information that was hid from the people in this province by the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador.

He's concerned today about the future of this province. What I'm concerned about, Mr. Speaker, is making sure that we put in measures, we put a plan in. There is no plan for the Leader of the Opposition. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to tell the people of this province what indeed his plan is for the future. We have put our plan forward and we will stand on that.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** I'd remind the Premier that when he was leader of the Opposition, he supported Muskrat Falls.

In *Budget 2016* –

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

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

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Some hon. Members need more self-restraint, Mr. Speaker.

In *Budget 2016*, this government increased the gas tax, brought in the levy, cut libraries and introduced a book tax because they needed the money. Yet, this budget opens the taps on spending with \$183 million increase.

Will the Premier admit that this spending increase makes return to balance highly improbable?

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

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

Well, I'm pleased to stand in this House again today – and yes, I spent four years as leader of the Opposition in this province. Mr. Speaker, I've had a muskrat in my life for nearly eight years. I can tell you what, I voted against it in 2012, Mr. Speaker. I voted against it in 2012. We led a filibuster in this House –

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

**PREMIER BALL:** – on two pieces of legislation, Bill 60 and Bill C-61. I'm on the record of not supporting Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you, though, we've had some good Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that have worked on that project, it is not their fault, it's the fault of the PC Party that got us in this mess we're in today – nearly 30 per cent of our net debt going directly to Muskrat Falls.

Yes, I'm concerned about the future of this province. We have put a plan in place to fix it. I ask the Leader of the Opposition: Where is your plan? When will the people of this province see it?

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

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



**MR. CROSBIE:** Perhaps the hon. Premier has forgotten that he asked to have our plan tabled and, in fact, it's tabled.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** The Premier will remember that \$200 million in supposed federal funding for his own Muskrat rate mitigation plan. It is not found in this year's budget.

Is it not found in this year's budget because Ottawa has not agreed to it?

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

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

So the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know right now that the only plan that the PC Party has for their future is one called a CHEAP plan. That's the only thing they got. Well, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, there is nothing cheap about that plan. It's the most expensive electricity that we've ever had in the history of this province. It's 17-cent power, Mr. Speaker. That's the plan that the Leader of the Opposition just said it's the only plan that he has.

I will tell you, we have laid out a very detailed plan for rate mitigation. For assurance, we put it in *The Way Forward*; it's been our vision. We put it in place in 2016, Mr. Speaker, and that plan is working.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know what plan the Premier is describing because it is not ours.

The Premier announced on Monday a rate mitigation plan and promised customers would not pay any more than 13.5 cents. First power is expected this budget year, but there is no funding in the budget for rate mitigation. Why not?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, talk about following plans. Well, I think we've learned a lesson about following the plan of the PC Party. There were a lot of people in this province who were supportive of the Muskrat Falls project back in 2015 because they were sold a bill of goods, but you delivered a different good; 17-cent power is way too much for the people in this province. This economy could not sustain it.

I want to go back to the \$200-million question that he had just a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker. The federal government, the Government of Canada, has made a commitment to work within the financial framework that's in place to come up with \$200 million. They've made a commitment that, working together, we could achieve that.

The Public Utilities Board, the experts, that the PC Party kicked out of Muskrat Falls – let's not forget that, and the condescending comments about their work.

We have a plan in place and we will work with the federal government to finalize the \$200 million.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday there was a lock-up pre-budget, the standard protocols, standard procedure, we turned over, in the PC caucus, our communication devices and we were monitored by officials for security. There was an official from the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour in the briefing with us who we discovered was sending messages, disclosing the nature of our discussions, back to the government.

Can the minister explain why his agent was ordered to eavesdrop on the Official Opposition?

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

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

I didn't order anybody to eavesdrop, but I'm not surprised, I expected more of the Leader of the Opposition than what he's delivering. He gives false accusations. He gives innuendos. He gives false information and he says that plans are false, agreements are fake and budgets are fake.

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

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I expected more of him.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** The minister of that department I mentioned may be better informed on this than the Minister of Finance.

So I ask him, when challenged as to why he was there and what he was doing, this employee was forthright, told us his name, said he was an official, and said he was ordered to be there to listen in on what we were saying and report back in real time on what he was hearing.

I ask the minister: Who ordered this to happen?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, it wasn't me.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, Treasury bills are short-term loans that government uses for cash flow purposes. This Liberal government has increased the T-bill program to over \$1 billion.

I ask the minister: Is this an indication that you have mismanaged government's cash flow?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, I have to take this question, because I was in a room within minutes when someone told me back in December of 2015 that we needed nearly \$400 million to get through December.

You want to talk about T-bills? There was no borrowing strategy when we came in in 2015.

Now, I'm not expecting the Members of the Opposition to even acknowledge this. No borrowing strategy at all, you had no – you couldn't go out and get a long-term financial commitment from the industry because they were living, really, just on a revolving line of credit. That's how this province was run.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, we changed that, and by the following November, we put in the long-term plan. We improved the syndicate. We increased the number of people that we could talk to. We have no problem right now getting money to keep this province running. We are doing a good job with it. As a matter of fact, we've reduced borrowing this year.

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

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

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

It's incredible after four years in government – in four years – we're going to an election now, and they're still blaming the former administration.

Premier, you asked our leader to apologize for Muskrat Falls. Why don't you stand up and apologize for Upper Churchill? Talk nonsense.

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

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

There is a classic example of someone that's not using the words – his own leader talks about Winston Churchill.

Mr. Speaker, you know very well – I speak to the Members opposite right now – when you look at four years ago, you see how sensitive they are when they get reminded about their

past. You see how sensitive they are when they're not accepting the responsibility.

I would be ashamed of it, too, if I sat in that chair. I would be ashamed that they will expose seniors of this province to 17 cent power under their CHEAP.

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

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

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

More of it again.

In the Department of Finance, there are two pots of money called Financial Assistance, which total \$19 million in 2018-2019, which Cabinet could transfer to other departments.

I ask the Premier: Provide a breakdown of what was spent out of this fund.

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not exactly sure, but I will have an answer for the Member.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

Last year, oil revenues were down by \$82 million due to the shutdown of the SeaRose FPSO. The province then had to borrow to make up the shortfall.

Why didn't the Premier ask for this project's partners to help cover the lost revenue?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, once again facts matter. The borrowing was actually down last year, if you look at what the borrowing commitment was. That is not lost revenue; that

is deferred revenue, Mr. Speaker, of some \$82 million from this shutdown.

Mr. Speaker, we went through this before. We've had Terra Nova that would have come off many years ago. That money comes back to the province. It could potentially come back at a price of oil that is worth more value. In this case, it was deferred revenue. The money is not lost, Mr. Speaker, and our borrowing was down last year.

This province is on track for a surplus in 2022, 2023 and every opportunity we can find to give back to the people of this province, we will, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Member opposite: In his next question will he start articulating what his plan is?

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

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

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

We're going to show them our plan now whenever he finds his way down to Government House.

If the money is not there to share, Premier, it's lost revenue. Even if it's down the road, we can't look in the future. Right now, if it's not there this year, it's lost revenue.

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

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

**MR. PETTEN:** In budget Estimates last year, the Minister of Justice said: I truly think budget Estimates are the most important part of the budget process because it's real questions, real answers, real information. Budget Estimates are important.

Why is the Premier throwing us into an election without a budget debate?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing this year is the deficit is down, our

borrowing is down. I take exception to what the Member of the Opposition just said about loss revenue. Mr. Speaker, it is deferred revenue.

I tell you, when you look it, if oil is in the ground and that oil comes up, it adds value. So why is it that the Member opposite would take a position that that is lost, Mr. Speaker? That is out there, Mr. Speaker.

It was unfortunate what happened that that revenue was deferred, but it was a situation that needed to occur because of safety. That revenue is not lost, it was deferred; less borrowing this year.

This province is back on track, Mr. Speaker. We've done a good job in fixing up the mess of this province.

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

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

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

I ask the Premier again, as his Government House Leader, the Minister of Justice stated: Estimates are a very important part of our budgetary process, real questions, real answers, real information.

Premier, just come clean: Why are you not allowing a budget debate before going to an election? It's a really important question that the people of the province would like an answer to.

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

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

I'm happy to stand here in the House and speak to this. The Member is actually right. I did say how important the Estimates were for any budget process. I enjoyed it on the Opposition side, I certainly enjoy it on the government side and I certainly will look forward to the Estimates process for *Budget 2019*.

Thank you.

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

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

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

When we advocated for the removal of tax on insurance the Premier said: Where would you replace that money?

I ask the Premier the same question today: What happened in the past month to make you decide to change your mind?

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

**PREMIER BALL:** Mr. Speaker, we went through a budget process, and in 2016 we made a commitment to the people of this province that when those temporary taxes could be removed, they would be removed. Mr. Speaker, we've done it already with a number of them. The levy is actually gone this year. I think everybody on this side of the House will be very pleased when that's gone. The people of this province will be very pleased when it's gone.

The only person, Mr. Speaker, that I'm saying that I've heard questions from that is not happy that we were able to relieve the auto insurance tax is the Member opposite. She should be up congratulating government today in putting relief for people in her own district.

Mr. Speaker, it's the same Member that just a few weeks ago said the doubling of electricity rates was a fallacy in this province. If it was a fallacy why do we need a rate mitigation plan?

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

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

**MS. PERRY:** To correct the record, Mr. Speaker, what I said is the Liberals were fear mongering, leading people to believe the rates would double when it was never something that had to happen. It's so unfortunate that so many people moved away because of that, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MS. PERRY:** When we asked the Finance Minister to commit to removing the tax on insurance, he said: Reducing the tax would reduce government revenues. He then suggested layoffs would occur as a result.

They shut down the House, wouldn't allow questions on the Atlantic Accord. They are going to shut down the House so we can't ask questions and find out what's hidden in the budget.

I ask the minister: Do you have layoffs hidden in this budget?

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

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

No, there are no layoffs. Our plan is around attrition, but since the Member was up and asking some good questions, what I'd like to know is: Where is the plan?

Explain to the people of this province what debt brake means because the Leader of the Opposition has made that as a pillar of his leadership, Mr. Speaker.

Debt brake means that next year in this province you'd have to find several hundred – millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. That will mean less services to the people in Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune. It will mean less services for the people in Windsor Lake. It will mean that there'll be drastic layoffs.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition and others to come clean: Where is your plan? How many people in this province will lose their jobs under a Tory administration?

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

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

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

There was no funding in this budget to replace École Norte-Dame-du-Cap.

I ask the Premier: Why not? Are francophone students on the West Coast not a priority for government?

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

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

As you know, and the Member opposite knows, we are really focusing a lot on how we are replacing our schools. Of course, as you know, that particular school, the situation, we're working through that with the school board and with the francophone school board.

If the Member was listening yesterday, there was actually \$2.8 million for looking at the new francophone school here in St. John's, and, of course, \$2.5 million of that is coming out of this budget and \$300,000 from the previous budget.

We are really committed, Mr. Speaker, to making sure that the infrastructure we have in place for our English School District and our French school district is going to be second to none.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

No doubt, we commend that we're going to be looking at additional needs here in the St. John's area for the French population, but the West Coast deserves it also. There's been a neglect on the West Coast when it comes to francophone students.

Mr. Speaker, 15 new drug therapies were announced yesterday; yet, no details to accompany this announcement. Questions like these would be asked in Estimates, but because we are likely not going to have that opportunity: Minister, is another program or service being cut to cover these drugs?

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

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

I, too, enjoy the Estimates process, I find it fascinating. The 15 new drugs are included in the budget. There are eight or nine for oncology, but it includes a variety of conditions like hidradenitis, it includes a new front-line treatment for MS and it's entirely funded within the budget from Health and Community Services.

We will have Estimates when we bring down our budget, after we come back in government, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Yesterday, government finally lifted the age cap for those currently enrolled in the insulin pump program; however, if you are over 25 you will not be covered.

Minister, what do you say to these people who are still being denied coverage?

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

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

We listened to the concerns about the age cap. I'll tell you what I'll say to those people who are not covered under the new arrangement: ask them to tell me how I could spend \$780 million a year that we wouldn't have to spend on rate mitigation to cover up the mess we inherited. That's where the money would come from.

Just imagine what I could do for the diabetic people of this province if I had access to a fraction of that money.

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

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

**MR. LESTER:** Mr. Speaker, last year the cannabis tax generated \$37,000 in revenue, but this year it's forecasted to generate \$5.4 million.

I ask the minister: What is the projection based on? How much of it is on the backs of those who are medically prescribed cannabis, and is this inflated?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I've answered the Member's questions a couple of times in this House. Medical cannabis is federally regulated. I'll try to spell it out as clearly as I can, because he's obviously not listening to the answer.

There's a drug identification number for drugs in Canada. There is no drug identification number yet for cannabis. When there is a drug identification number we can then look at the request that the Member is making. Until then, I suggest he speak to the federal government.

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

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

**MR. LESTER:** Minister, how much of the \$40 million has been given to Canopy Growth to date? Are they adhering to the terms of their contract?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, for a quick response, please.

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

We're very pleased that we're having cannabis supply and production that's happening here in our province. That's creating jobs and growing the economy. We do have full compliance on this particular matter, and we have documentation to back that up.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

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

In 2015, after assuming office, the Premier expressed shock at the real state of the province's finances and criticized the outgoing government for being so secretive. We know from government links to the media that government may go to the polls without a proper debate on the province's finances.

So I ask the Premier: How does he square those things in himself – secrecy on the one hand, but not for him?

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

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

Well, first and foremost, the budget was laid out yesterday with all the Estimates material, Mr. Speaker. It's all laid out clearly to the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, that was very different than what was done in 2015. We've put in place new mechanisms, new legislation. So right now all that information is out there.

The best people in this province to actually look at this budget, do the analyzing of the information that's there, is the very people that would be impacted by it. These are every single resident in Newfoundland and Labrador, including the Members opposite.

So if indeed there's an election call, Mr. Speaker, either it's to be debated here in this House, or debated on the doorsteps of this province. This budget, the only budget that this government will be – this is the budget that will be debated, and if we come back, this is the budget that will be passed.

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

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

Order, please!

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

Well, I hope the average person out in the public gets a copy of the book called *The Economy*, along with a copy of the Budget Speech, along with all the different sheets, because without all of them they don't get the full picture. The Budget Speech doesn't tell them the realities that are in that *Economy* booklet, and I'll be talking about that later today.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier said we would be going to the polls before the school year ended. There's ample time for a proper budget debate and an election campaign.

I ask the Premier: Why doesn't he not want this budget debated?

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

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

Well, the budget material, I will say, is all online, which includes the material that was just mentioned. That's the goal to get that information out there, Mr. Speaker. We have used EngageNL and a number of consultations that we've had around this province to help form the information that goes in this budget.

With that said, the debates that will occur – Mr. Speaker, every single person in this House of Assembly have told us, bring on the election. They said to us that they're ready. The party that she's a part of, Mr. Speaker, said bring it on.

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

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

**PREMIER BALL:** The Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the PC Party has been driving a bus around St. John's today. There's been a tour wagon that hasn't toured, that's been stuck in the parking lot over there for months. People in this province, Mr. Speaker, have been asking for this, as have all (inaudible).

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, fixed election dates level the playing field for all parties and provide transparency for the voters, but the Premier's game playing about a rushed spring election announcement provides none of that.

I ask the Premier: Why is he causing confusion and consternation for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador by not coming clean on announcing the actual election date?

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

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

Well, right now, I've made a commitment to the people of this province back a few weeks ago. Basically, everyone in this House would have heard this. Everybody in this House would have responded to that. People have challenged me to bring it on. Mr. Speaker, people have said they've been ready. The Leader of the PC Party has been asking since January to do this.

Everybody has called for nominations, including the party that the Member opposite represents. They have all their nominations open. People are preparing, Mr. Speaker. The date that we've put out there, as I've made the commitment to have insurance, made a commitment for rate mitigation, made a commitment to put the Budget out. Mr. Speaker, all of this work has been done.

Right now, the people that would gauge and put – as we've completed our mandate, Mr. Speake, that will have their say are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Why waste everyone's time by setting up a Select Committee on Democratic Reform if he only intends to play by the rules of old school politics and shows contempt for our democracy?

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

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

I'm happy to speak to the Committee for Democratic Reform, which has actually had a number of meetings now, and I can guarantee you that after the election, when it happens, that Committee will continue to live on.

So again, we're happy to make changes. We've made more changes in 3½ years than were made in the two decades before when it comes to reforming this House. I'm proud to do that and I'm looking forward to continuing it as well.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre for a quick question, please.

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, why does this government have such contempt for the democratic process and what does this say about its commitment to democratic reform? And we haven't had several meetings. We've had two short meetings.

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

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

I find it interesting that the NDP is talking about democratic reform. We only have to look at their process when it came to their nominations to see how they feel about democratic reform.

The fact is, in the last 3½ years, we've done more than has been done in the two decades previous, and we're going to continue that work after an election.

Thank you.



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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The time for Oral Questions is over.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

There have been numerous concerns raised by family members of seniors in long-term care throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly those suffering with dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive debilitating conditions, whereby loved ones have experienced injuries, have not been bathed regularly, not received proper nutrition and/or have been left lying in their own waste for extended periods of time. We believe this is directly related to government's failure to ensure adequate staffing at those facilities.

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to instate legislation which includes the mandatory establishment of an adequate ratio of one staff to three residents in long-term care and other applicable regional health facilities housing persons with dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive debilitating conditions in order to ensure appropriate safety, protection from injuries, proper hygiene care and all other required care –

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

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

**MR. LANE:** This law would include the creation of a specific job position in these facilities for monitoring and intervention as required to ensure the safety of patients.

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

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

It's difficult to hear the Member, please.

Thank you.

**MR. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, I present this petition again today – possibly the last day, depending on if an election is called – on behalf of Advocates for Senior Citizens' Rights. As I have said many times, this is their petition. We've literally had thousands of signatures go through on this.

I will once again reiterate that this is not in any way condemning the staff of these facilities or the care that they provide, or their level of compassion and so on. It's simply saying that it is felt by many people in this province that there is not always adequate staffing in these facilities when it comes to people who have Alzheimer's, dementia and so on, making sure that they are receiving the appropriate care that they are required, and making sure that it happens at all times.

All they're asking for here – they're asking for legislation. They're not interested in the health authorities having a policy. They're not interested in regulations. They want something that will set a standard in legislation to guarantee, at all times, that our seniors that are in these facilities are receiving the appropriate care at all times, that there's enough staff there all the time to do it.

That's what they've been asking. I've presented this numerous times. Today, we have people from Wabush and Lab City on this petition. Certainly, if we're here tomorrow, I'll present it again tomorrow; if not, I will be presenting these petitions after the election.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Further petitions?

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

**MS. ROGERS:** 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 Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest minimum wages in Canada and minimum wage workers earn poverty incomes; and

WHEREAS proposals to index the minimum wage to inflation will not address poverty if the wage is too low to start with; and

WHEREAS women and youth and service sector employees are particularly hurt by the low minimum wage; and

WHEREAS the minimum wage only rose only 5 per cent between 2010 and 2016, while many food items rose more than 20 per cent; and

WHEREAS the minimum wage only rose between 2010 and 2016; and

WHEREAS other Canadian jurisdictions are implementing or considering a \$15 minimum wage as a step towards a living wage;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to legislate a gradual increase in the minimum wage to \$15 by 2021, with an annual adjustment thereafter to reflect provincial inflation.

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

Mr. Speaker, I stand and speak to this once again, particularly in light of this budget. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador have been hit hard. They were hit hard in 2016 budget, they were hit hard in the 2017 budget and there is no relief in this particular budget that this government has brought forth. There has been no relief for the average working

person, particularly for the person who is making minimum wage and trying to live on minimum wage, trying to raise their families, trying to put a roof over their heads, trying to feed their children, let alone even trying to feed themselves.

So, why this government hasn't acted in the best interest of the working people of Newfoundland and Labrador is beyond me. Why this government believes that the working people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve to be paid the lowest minimum wage in the whole country, why this government believes that is okay for our hard-working people is beyond me. This government has done nothing to alleviate the burden that our people are paying because of the actions of the Conservative government through Muskrat Falls. They made the problem and this government hasn't made it any better for the people.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are still carrying the burden of the economic disaster that we have faced over the past few years, and they've done nothing, absolutely nothing, to relieve that burden.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for a response, please.

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

I'd like to thank the hon. Member for bringing this petition forward again today. Effective just April 1, we, as the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, brought forward an increase to the minimum wage by 25 cents to make it \$11.40.

I do agree with the hon. Member that always, every government should try to do more, and we are. We've put a transparent and open annual increase to the minimum wage, tied to the national CPI, which is an important piece for balance within the industry between the labour force and the employers. So it's very important that we've done that, we committed to do that and we'll continue to do that.

Also, part of that, is after the two-year period we're in right now, we're going to be looking at opportunities to evaluate that and see if there's anything more we can do in that area.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Further petitions?

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

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

The government now requires regional health authorities to strictly enforce a policy that requires all applicants being assessed to have a physical care need to qualify for admission to a personal care home. Seniors with issues such as anxiety, depression, fear of falling and loneliness are no longer eligible. Many seniors who would have qualified just months ago are now being denied access.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to revise the policy on personal care home access.

Mr. Speaker, we've spoken to this and we've had petitions with hundreds of names coming from all different parts of the province itself, and coming from different sectors – the families who have this as it impacts them, individual clients, residents who would like to avail of a service in a particular personal care home, the general public, leaders in our municipalities, all see the value of ensuring that our seniors have peace of mind and are in a safe environment that is conducive to their lifestyle.

Their lifestyle would be feeling no anxiety, feeling no fear, being accompanied around people, particularly in areas or in a circumstance where they no longer can stay in their own home. I've said it before, and the majority of the population here would agree to a Home First policy. If you can stay at home, if you're comfortable there, if you can help care for yourself with some additional supports, if you have supports from your family, if the community itself can do it, if the physical layout

of your home is conducive to you to be able to stay there and your peace of mind is enhanced, it's a perfect thing.

We have a responsibility to offer programs, and it's being done. It's being done through the regional health authorities. It's being done through supports through the different avenues and programs within the Department of Health. So it's a positive there. But there is a segment of our society, a vulnerable segment, of seniors who unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond their control – a spouse has passed away or a circumstance has changed, the size of a house, the layout itself, the other mental health issues around anxiety, around fear, the changes in their neighbourhoods have all had an impact on them wanting to live in an environment that's conducive to keeping them safe and giving them a quality of life for the remainder of their life. That adds to everybody in our society. It adds to their families. It eliminates the stressors on them. It ensures that we have a system in place that every senior, regardless of their physical ability or their health conditions, would have an environment that keeps them safe.

So we're talking about you don't measure one of physical health to mental health. I thought in our society here we assessed the needs, the health needs of an individual. Some are very physically fit but have some mental health supports that are needed. Some other ones who have great mental health, but have some physical ailments. But we need to have a balance there that we'd be able to ensure people get to provide the services that are needed.

Mr. Speaker, we'll have an opportunity again to present this petition on behalf of the seniors here of this province of ours and asking that they be given the proper services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Further petitions?

Orders of the DayPrivate Members' Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** This being Wednesday, I now call on the Member for Bonavista to introduce the motion standing in his name and place, Motion 8.

Thank you, Sir.

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

I move, seconded by the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, the following resolution:

WHEREAS the Leader of the Opposition has finally admitted that the problems we have faced as a province over the last four years were inherited from the previous administration; and

WHEREAS the projected deficit for the year 2016-17 was projected to be \$2.7 billion if no action was taken, making it the largest deficit in the province's history; and

WHEREAS despite the fiscal situation we found ourselves in when forming office, we have drastically reduced our provincial deficit; and

WHEREAS government spending throughout the former PC administration increased by over 50 per cent, despite a decline in oil revenues; and

WHEREAS our government has stabilized spending to a manageable level, reduced our reliance on oil and diversified our economy;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the fiscal and economic plan for the province as laid out in *Budget 2019*.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

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

I think the preamble itself says all I need to say about the past and the legacy of the PC Party. I'm not going to use my speech today to be negative or talk about the past. I'm going to use my speech today to talk about a bright future

that we have in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm going to talk about the good things that are happening in the District of Bonavista. I'm going to talk about *Budget 2019* and how it progressively sets our province towards that bright future.

I think that I can easily say that these have certainly been the most challenging four years that we have faced in our province's history, given what we faced when we took office in late 2015. Just imagine: Hours after being sworn in as Premier, you are told by senior government officials that without quick and decisive action, you wouldn't be able to pay our valuable and hard-working public servants. Imagine the prospect of not being able to pay our workers a wage 10 days before Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, that is what our Premier and our government faced. Our Premier didn't back down from that challenge then, and we, as government, have not backed down from getting this wonderful province back on track. Have there been some tough decisions that had to be made? Yes, there were. Is there anyone on this House that is happy about making the tough, but necessary actions? No, there isn't, Mr. Speaker.

However, it is the tough decisions that are guiding us back to prosperity because any one can govern when times are good. We promised that as we have been able to reverse the actions taken from early in our mandate, we would. Mr. Speaker, that is a promise that we've kept. Our hard work and determination to return this surplus has never waivered. Our track record speaks for our sound fiscal management.

I'm going to get into some of the highlights of *Budget 2019*, Mr. Speaker. In the nearly two hours that the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board spoke, there was quite a bit that I took out it. I was taking many notes, a lot of tabs here and I don't want to use this as a prop but you can certainly see the tabs of all the good things that I've picked out of it; things that not just affect the District of Bonavista but the province as a whole; things that are progressive and that will move our province forward; things that we, as government, can take to the people of the province; things that our government can be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, one of those things is lifting the age cap for those currently enrolled in the Insulin Pump Program to ensure continued coverage for individuals who rely on this program. I give the first- and second-year MUN medical students a big shout-out for having this as their day of action issue this year. They eloquently spoke about the importance of this particular plan. I'm proud to say that I sat there with that group, listened and brought that back to the Minister of Health so we could move this issue forward. It's something I know all our caucus is very proud of, Mr. Speaker.

As being an MHA for a district where you have a lot of children with type 1 diabetes, it gives peace of mind to them and their families. They're not paying out of pocket for the pump and their supplies, not having to pay out for a new pump when it breaks. Mr. Speaker, that's progressive. That is a great thing for the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, we're also introducing Eye See Eye Learn Program with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Optometrists to provide children starting kindergarten with free comprehensive eye exams. This is another progressive action that our government is moving forward with. Just imagine being a young child and not being able to see the blackboard, not being able to read your book. Having this put in place to have a child have their eyes checked early on gives them a head start. It's not putting them behind from the start, from the eight ball. I'm so proud to see this and it's going to positively affect many, many people, not just here in the District of Bonavista, but province wide – very progressive move.

Mr. Speaker, one thing I want to talk about is the additional \$270,000 for our 50-plus clubs where they can qualify up to \$2,000 for activities. I liaise with a number of 50-plus in my district, and one of the things that they enjoy doing is the social activities. We're able to get some money from them through the Community Healthy Living Fund, but it's a little restrictive of what we can actually do.

This is actually giving them up \$2,000 for social activities. As a senior, getting out of that house, getting in a group amongst their friends, that adds value to their life, that adds esprit de corps

as we would call it in the military. Being around people, having those conversations, it gets rid of the loneliness. So I'm so proud that we have put this into our budget for 2019, and it's certainly something I'll be bringing to the doors.

Mr. Speaker, as a veteran myself, I am proud to see that there's a 10 per cent discount for veterans on registration of a veteran's licence plate, and that I reminds me that I have to go get a veteran's licence plate so I get the rebate next year. It's great to see that we're going to be under \$100 for registration for seniors, as well, if they do it online, it's going to be less than \$90. So that's adding more savings.

Throughout the 3½, four years one of the biggest things I've heard is you guys got to get rid of that tax on automobile insurance. I've been telling people we are fighting every day for that. It's something that we didn't want to do; however, it's something that we had to put in as a temporary fix for the fiscal mismanagement of the former PC government.

When you face a \$2.7-billion deficit, you have to put in measures which you don't necessarily like, but are necessary to get our province back on track. And it was such a good thing to see that come off this week. Just give me a second and I can probably read a testimonial from someone. She didn't want me to mention her name, but she said: Great news on the elimination of the 50 per cent insurance tax. As a new driver, with a clean driving record and a new car, this tax caused my premium to increase by \$800 a year. This tax break was greatly appreciated and you can use me as an example. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly glad to see that we're in a sound, fiscal state where we can take that tax back off of the insurance because it is affecting our public.

What I'm also excited about is the \$1 million increase in fire and emergency services, certainly with the new and used vehicle program. There are three fire departments in the District of Bonavista which are looking for a new or used truck and certainly I'll be advocating the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I have talked his ears off recently about that and there are some old trucks in the district with these departments. I've been advocating on those and we've got one town especially

watching the auctions all the time to see what kind of deal they can get on a used vehicle because of the progressive policy that we brought in that we no longer have to buy new vehicles. That saves government money, that gives smaller communities an opportunity to buy those vehicles, come in on a partnership at a lower cost, Mr. Speaker, and that's something that I'm very proud of our government.

Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a lot of new, young families come to the District of Bonavista and it's great to see. As we have an aging population, you see a lot of people retiring, you're seeing younger people come into government jobs, whether it is at the hospital, the home, social work, teaching and whatnot through the district. But extending maternity, adoption and parental leave from 52 weeks to 78 weeks is something that gives families the time to appreciate what they have at home. I'm certainly glad of that.

Mr. Speaker, the release of our Cultural Action Plan and the \$1 million increase to our ArtsNL funding, and that's huge in the District of Bonavista. At the top of the peninsula, you have a number of organizations who rely on this funding. Certainly, arts and culture is huge and it draws thousands of people to the District of Bonavista every year. Talking to Donna Butt of the Rising Tide Theatre yesterday, she gave me four hugs and a kiss on the cheek. So, I think she's happy about that.

Another thing, I know the Leader of the Opposition talked about heat pumps and he didn't much appreciate people going out and getting them but we have a \$1,000 grant for the installation of heat pumps, which is lowering heating costs for our public and putting more money back in their pocket.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about all the investments in mental health. It's exciting to see our government be committed to breaking ground on the Waterford replacement this year. I'm excited about the \$2.5 million investment, not just from our government, from community partners who have led the charge for a new health and wellness facility in the District of Bonavista. That will go along with \$2.2 million that will go towards the development of new emergency room department in Bonavista at the

hospital. Those are great things and I'm so excited to see that.

Today we saw the announcement of allocating \$2.5 million and growing to \$5 million in the years following to implement an Autism Action Plan. That's something that the families in my district will certainly feel good about and have the supports there for them that they need. I know the Autism Society was having some struggles this year, so it's great to have that support to help them out.

Mr. Speaker, I've got about a minute and a half left; I'm just going to get to some last-minute things. We're seeing a \$594 million investment in infrastructure, which is part of government's rolling five-year infrastructure plan. That's directly going to affect the District of Bonavista. You see a number of infrastructure projects taking place over the last four years. Every year we've seen great work. We've seen some great roadwork done through the District of Bonavista. This year, you're going to see Route 235 done on a multi-year project; Route 239 on a two-year project; Confederation Drive in Bonavista is going to be done and some side roads; and refurbishment of the George's Brook Bridge. That's all throughout the District of Bonavista. That's not putting our eggs into one area.

Continued support for our agriculture, forestry, fishing industry – and those are key industries in my district, along with tourism, Mr. Speaker. I'm so glad that we're continuing in increasing the investment in those areas.

Last but not least, I want to talk about rate mitigation. I sat in the foyer on Monday morning and certainly glad to see that we have a plan that works for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that will protect them from the cost associated with the increase of the boondoggle of Muskrat Falls. Mr. Speaker, we're committed to keeping our power rates at 13.5 cents a kilowatt hour, Mr. Speaker. That's peace of mind that the people of this province – this is not a 17-cent plan; this is a plan that people can actually afford.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

It's a pleasure to get up and speak on this motion. Well, I enjoy getting up and speaking on most of these motions but with this possibly being the last motion – I think it will be the last motion of this Assembly – I found it interesting that the WHEREASes through the motion, I guess on one side you can consider them factual. I don't know if they're factual throughout, but I guess the electorate will decide that in the next coming weeks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say they inherited big challenges, just as we will when government changes. They also inherited all the province's opportunities and strengths. Unfortunately, they didn't know how to put the opportunities and strengths to work and address challenges. Obviously, the Liberals are feeling defensive and nervous about this as they prepare to face the voter's wrath.

The Liberals inherited low revenues at a time of low oil prices. When revenues drop sharply equalization is supposed to kick in to spare people deep cuts or big tax hikes, but it didn't, and the Liberals didn't fight for it. The Liberals let their federal cousins off the hook on equalization in their entire mandate, refusing to fight for fairness and failing to deliver. They also failed in their restraint to restrain spending. They did cut hundreds of jobs but then they hired Liberal friends.

They failed to grow revenues by growing the economy. Instead, they took the lazy approach by putting the burden on the backs of taxpayers and employers. They started off by cutting the HST for 30 seconds before raising it up again. Then they raised another 300 taxes and fees right along with them, most of which are still gouging people.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, we hear this *Budget 2017* and *Budget 2018*, and *Budget 2019* is what they're into now. The whole motion behind this resolution is to support government's fiscal plan, which is *Budget 2019*.

One thing I think needs to be made abundantly clear, and what I'm going to say now is the 2016 budget is still alive and well. It's had some cosmetics done. There are some changes here and there, but we're still living in the same budget. That budget has not been reversed. The same taxes and fees are still there. There has been some adjustments made, I agree, and all of that stuff is good.

The Member for Bonavista points out some good things in the budget. We're not standing here, and I don't think any of us – I mean, I'm not. We're not saying that it's all bad. We're not saying that certain things are not good in that budget. Of course they are, but the people see through that stuff, Mr. Speaker.

I've spoken to many, and I'll continue to speak to many. I'll speak to a lot more in the coming weeks. People find that insulting, because they see through it. They'll say, yes, that's great that the auto insurance tax is removed. That is good. I agree it is good, but they see through it. They know what it's about. It is old fashion, pork-barrel politicking, Mr. Speaker.

Today's electorate are much more intelligent; they're brighter. We have a smart electorate. I've had people say it to me just in conversations unrelated to any of this politicking or whatever you call it, just in day-to-day meeting people. They actually brought that up to me in the last days.

So when I hear that and I see government standing up and touting how wonderful things are and how much and how good they've done. Sure, they made some good decisions. I'll be the first – I think collectively we all say – when something is good, I don't mind saying it's good. I'll give the devil their dues, no problem. If you do good I'll applaud it, I always have, but to say the world is changed and all is well, I don't really get that argument, Mr. Speaker.

For four years, since December 2015, this province had a black cloud over it. So now we're into April of 2019 facing an election and all of a sudden all is well, everything is cured. Don't worry, everything is good. Life is great. Forget about what's happened in the past, we've turned the corner. Things could never be better. The future is bright. But, Mr. Speaker, an honest

question I think should be asked: Is it that much brighter? Are we in that much of a better place?

We're going to get a surplus next year based on the fact that an accounting procedure, of all the \$1.9 billion that we're supposed to get over 38 years, is going to be put into the budget for next year. There is no surplus, Mr. Speaker. It's a paper exercise. It is deficit and more deficit and more deficit.

The administration opposite will blame the former administration for the mismanagement of Muskrat Falls. Sham on you. But, Mr. Speaker, when you watch and you read and you listen to that inquiry, that's not totally accurate. There's another part to that, too. There's probably about \$900 million with the Muskrat Falls protest – you know what I'm talking about – inaction by government that drove the cost up. We don't really know the exact cost because that has not been really dictated to us. That's estimates.

Blame the former administration – and that's been a theme for four years. I get it for the first year or two. I think that's normal. I think with every administration change that'll happen. That's an easy target, low-hanging fruit. When you're into four years later and you're going back to face the electorate again for another term, and you're still here on the last day before we go for a break and still blaming the former administration, it amazes me. And you have a PMR that's doing exactly that. After four years, isn't it time for government to collectively look in the mirror and ask themselves, what have you done? What have we done to make this place better? Forget about the former, forget about what happened there.

One thing, the Premier will get up and he'll ask for our leader to apologize for Muskrat Falls. He wasn't the leader of the party when Muskrat Falls was sanctioned. I wasn't with this party when Muskrat Falls was sanctioned. I wasn't a Member of this House. Most of us here, actually, weren't. And the jury is still out on how that really unfolded, but to be getting up tonight and constantly going with that same theme. It's equally as silly as me – and I used it today in QP – why don't you stand up and apologize for the Upper Churchill deal? That's absolutely out to lunch. Why should the Premier have to do that? He shouldn't. I used it as a comparison. The

same thing applies to our Leader of the Opposition. That takes away from what we do in here, Mr. Speaker.

These PMRs, it's fine to highlight some of the good things you got in the budget, some of the good things in your district, some of the bad things, and that's fine, but for people to start taking us serious, I think we need to rise above a lot of this back and forth when it comes to that. Fair debate, I'll debate with the best of them. I enjoy getting up. I enjoy a bit of back and forth, banter. I love it. Sometimes it leads to a healthy debate, sometimes it's not so healthy, but I guess that's part of this parliament. I think rising above that and taking ownership for something – if you do something, if we make a mistake, own that, accept that.

It is growing really tired and thin on a lot of people. I know me, in particular, it's more annoying than anything. You look at the levy, one of the most unpopular taxes that was ever implemented in this province, in my opinion. *The Telegram* reported this past weekend they collected \$160 million to date. Fair enough. And you got to remove yourself – again, I try to say remove yourself from this climate and this atmosphere we're in here.

Take the Joe Q publics, you're out and you read that in the paper, and then you see even three days over \$300 million in announcements. Some of them are different, maybe cost shared. There may be monies coming from here, there may be monies here marked for a different time. To the general public, they read one story about \$160 million in levy collected. On the other hand – and that means we're in need. The government are cash strapped. They are in need of all this funding. That was the argument for the levy. On the other hand, there's \$350 million being spent.

So, you're out sitting down in a coffee shop and you're reading the paper or watching the news, you can't help but ask yourself: what's this about? Then when you flick on the news, and you'll see people on the one side, well, that's their fault. That's the other crowd. That's their fault. The former administration, that's their fault. That don't cut it either, Mr. Speaker, because people are tired of that. People just want legitimate, honest answers.



When I go around and I knock on doors and I talk to people, I might have said this in this House before and I'll say it again, I don't know what script I subscribe to because it's no good keeping me on message because I have my own message, I have my own beliefs and I'm like that in my own home. I'm pretty easy going, but if I believe in something, I believe in it. I don't really have to follow to get approval from anyone else. If I have an opinion on something, I'll share it.

When I go door to door, that's who I am. I'm a Member of this party and I support the principles of this party but I don't always agree with everything that happens in this party. Members around this table will tell you, and I've said this in the House before too, and they'll be quick to tell you, I don't mind sharing my views if I don't agree. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, a couple of times me and you have had a debate, but I think that's healthy. I think that's where you create relationships.

I do believe the public deserves that, and that's why I say this collectively when we speak about all of this stuff, these PMRs, I could get up here now – I have another few minutes – and I could be swinging papers and I could be into – which I'm capable of doing too – a rant but I'm not going to do that.

First of all, I think this is the last PMR of this session, I would think, and more respectful to the issue, but reading this motion, I think that's the thing that really, really, I suppose, hits to the core or the crux of the problem. Sometimes when we look at government and our politics and our Parliament and the issues that face us on a day-to-day basis, blaming a former administration, no matter what stripe they are is not going to deal with today's issues. That's not what the general public want.

Don't matter if it's a Tory blaming a Liberal or a Liberal blaming a Tory, we need to rise above that. Again, I'll go back, I'll debate, I'll argue, we'll get into it and that's fair game. That's what some of this is about, but trying to twist one thing into being another and trying to make someone look worse than another; just face the facts.

What I said earlier when I said we're still in the 2016 budget, we're still living it. If someone can tell me I'm wrong on that, well, fair enough. I don't think I am because we've done research. We've looked up the figures. Everything is still there. Those are facts. We all talk about facts matter and all these punchlines but those are facts.

People are suffering in this economy, Mr. Speaker. In my community – in my last few minutes – in my District of CBS, five or six years ago everything was booming. The economy was booming, housing starts were off the charts. It was amazing. Everywhere you looked there were contractors going, there was lumberyards flat out. There were trucks. The place was literally on fire.

You go to CBS now, it's considered to be the second-largest municipality in the province, one of the fastest growing outside of my colleague from Topsail - Paradise, Paradise being, I think, the fastest growing now. These places were on fire, but with this economy, they're not on fire anymore. People are struggling.

You look around and you think that things are not so bad. They're not so bad, Mr. Speaker, to some extent, and on the East Coast they're probably better than out in your district and a lot of other rural districts. I know there are probably struggles there that we don't have on the East Coast because we're close to more of the populous and more of the economy is at a higher peak, but people are struggling. People are struggling and I hear it every day.

We get calls to our offices, people are struggling. When they come in and they look for my help, as MHA or any of us in this Chamber, do they want me to tell them, well, b'y, I can't help you or do you want someone to tell you, I can't help you, that other crowd blew all the money. That's not my fault, that's their fault.

No, you get up, you go in, you check with – if worse comes to worst, you contact a minister, and which most are pretty receptive. You try to work through the problem, which comes back to my argument of the blame game, pointing fingers. Everyone does this to a certain degree, but it's time to move past that. Give the public

real answers. Give the public the answers they deserve. Respect the electorate.

Right now, people don't feel respected when you – some things that are being said and done in a public forum, it might be happening right now as I'm speaking, people see through this stuff, Mr. Speaker, but I'll tell you now, outside of this bubble that exists in this Chamber, people want honest answers. They want factual answers. They may not like the answer but if you're telling them the truth, I think all of us can attest to that, people respect you telling the truth more so than telling them something you want them to believe.

We can get up here, and I could get up and I could have went on for – which I've done before for my full time and blast everyone, but I chose to go a different route today because I think that the bigger picture, as I'm winding down my minutes in this Assembly, is that's something we can all strive to do better as we move forward.

Wherever we go when we leave here, whether we're back here for the next Assembly or wherever we go, I just think that's something that maybe I've learned. I don't know if others have learned it but it's something that we all learn or something you take from it. I think it's something that we can all do as a group, collectively, to try to do better and in doing that, I think, Mr. Speaker, we can serve our constituents in a much better way.

Thank you very much.

**MR. SPEAKER (Warr):** Thank you.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

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

Indeed it's a pleasure, always, to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the good people of Placentia West - Bellevue each and every time that I have that opportunity.

I certainly want to commend my colleague, the Member for Bonavista, who is a true advocate for the people of his region where there are lots of things happening on the Bonavista Peninsula, contrary to what we hear from some Members

opposite, Mr. Speaker, who say there's not much happening out there. So, I'm certainly glad to see a very active Member for that area promoting that area.

As he mentioned, Donna Butt of Rising Tide, who was here yesterday, she certainly left with a smile on her face, particularly with some of the investments in arts yesterday, which was very positive, Mr. Speaker.

The resolution before us speaks to: "WHEREAS the Leader of the Opposition has finally admitted that the problems we have faced as a Province over the last 4 years were inherited from the previous administration."

Mr. Speaker, I don't think these facts are being brought to bear as the Member for Conception Bay South says, to play a blame game. It's merely to provide context, Mr. Speaker; context for where we were four years ago, where we have come and where we are going.

I say to my colleague across the way, if we want to start talking about some of the Progressive Conservative's greatest hits, I could certainly go down that road, whether it's ferries that were exported off to Romania that could have been built in Marystown, that then was subject to tariffs that this government had to go and get relieved, I say, Mr. Speaker, \$50 million that you left as a bill on your way out the door. That's something that we had to relieve from the federal government because they didn't even have the foresight or planning to consider the tariffs that were going to be put on the ferries that they exported to Romania that could have been, and should have been, built in Marystown. Then, to top it off, Mr. Speaker, they even forgot the wharf.

Mr. Speaker, I could certainly go down that road but I won't.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** We are where we are and these things are not to lay blame on anyone, Mr. Speaker, it's to provide context. It's to assure people that decisions that we took, there were reasons for it because there was a mess left behind. Look no further, Mr. Speaker, than the Muskrat Falls project.

We're hearing some Members opposite say that the doubling of electricity rates, as a result of that project, is a fallacy; that concept is a fallacy. Mr. Speaker, the Public Utilities Board has ruled on this and is very aware that that is indeed not a fallacy.

Look no further, Mr. Speaker, than the economy that we're building up on the Burin Peninsula now between aquaculture, between mining; hopefully, very soon there's going to be much more industry being built up there as well.

When you look at the fish plants, Mr. Speaker, we have two of the largest fish plants, what I liken to be the crown jewels of the FPI crown. We have the largest primary processing plant in Marystown and the province's only – at that time – secondary processing plant in Burin. One is closed, the other one is a heap of rubble. That is the legacy of jobs from the Members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I don't need to go there, Mr. Speaker, because we're all aware of that, and it's to provide context.

So, the motion before us today is:  
 “THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House supports the fiscal and economic plan for the Province as laid out in Budget 2019.”

Mr. Speaker, this budget is balanced in terms of its approach to the people of the province. It is a good fiscal plan. We are providing relief. I'm very pleased to see the insurance retail tax relieved in this budget. We have continuously relieved the tax burden, where possible, over this mandate. That is a result of the leadership of this Premier, of this government, and we're going to continue where and when we can. That is why this motion is being brought forward today, Mr. Speaker, to support the fiscal outlook of this province.

We're seeing all the economic indicators, whether it's retail sales and onward, they're all looking up. They are exceeding the projections that Members opposite had put out in their budget in 2015 for these years.

I see Members shaking their heads over there, Mr. Speaker. Well, I can tell you, I shook my

head when you let the fish plant in Marystown go down to a heap of rubble too, I say to the Member opposite.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** I shook my head then. When the slogan was new energy, 'twas no energy, I can assure the Members opposite back in 2011. Because there wasn't a finger lifted to help the people of the Burin Peninsula then.

You look at the mine in St. Lawrence, Mr. Speaker. The ribbon was cut up that often they couldn't even find it when they went back for their 10th or 12th ribbon cutting.

So, I'm not going to take any lessons from job creation from the Members opposite. You can shake your heads all you want, I say to the Members opposite because this government, we believe in economic development, we have a plan that's creating jobs in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm very proud and I'm willing to run on my record of job creation on the Burin Peninsula, I say to the Members opposite.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** Back to the resolution at hand, Mr. Speaker, where we are supporting the fiscal and economic plan as laid out in *Budget 2019*. These are some of the highlights in this year's budget, including introducing the Eye See Eye Learn Program, which will provide children starting in kindergarten with three comprehensive eye exams.

We're allocating \$2.5 million, which will grow then to \$5 million in the following years to implement the Autism Action Plan. There will be an addition of 15 new drug therapies for the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program, eight of which are for oncology. And we'll be lifting the age cap for those currently enrolled in the Insulin Pump Program to ensure continued coverage for individuals who rely on the program.

Mr. Speaker, we're also going to be accelerating growth in the ocean technology industry with an investment of \$2.5 million in a new 36,000-square-foot facility at the Marine Institute's Holyrood Marine Base. I am very proud to work

with the Member for Harbour Main and the strong advocacy she's provided for her region and to this government.

Also, I'm very pleased to see the introduction of targeted programs in the aquaculture and mining industries at the College of the North Atlantic campuses in Burin and Grand Falls-Windsor in the fall of 2019 to help create new employment opportunities in key provincial industries.

Mr. Speaker, there is certainly a lot here. There's certainly a lot in this budget to take in. The former leader of the Third Party said today that she hopes that the people of the province can get access to these documents. Well, they're all online, which is wonderful for the people to have the opportunity. They are all online for people to have that opportunity to peruse them, to read them, and I'm looking very much forward to having those debates with the people in the district that I'm so honoured, at this point in time, to represent, and I'll certainly be having those discussions.

Mr. Speaker, just looking at the Autism Action Plan that was announced today. As I mentioned some \$2.5 million in this year's budget, which will grow to \$5 million in following years. This is a very important action plan. We have a very active Burin Peninsula support group for parents with children with autism, a very active group. I attend their walk every year, Mr. Speaker. They are a very dedicated and committed group of parents. I know they're going to be very pleased with the 46 actions which are a part of the plan; 19 of which will be completed by next year in March; 22 by the following March; and the remaining five the following March from that.

I think one of the most important provisions that I've heard from the parents, Mr. Speaker, is that we will improve access to home and community support services by eliminating the criteria of IQ 70 from the current eligibility requirements.

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

**MR. BROWNE:** Mr. Speaker, that's a big win for those who have been advocating for this and I certainly congratulate them for stepping up.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is coming to a close in a few minutes, but I certainly want to say that

the resolution that's been brought forward by the Member for Bonavista, I believe, is a good one at this point in time. For the Members opposite who have been trying to say that they're not going to get a debate and that they're not debating, well this is a debate, Mr. Speaker, and we're continue this for the afternoon.

I recall the private Member's resolution that was brought in for Muskrat Falls, Mr. Speaker, and I'll say no more. What was then even thought to be \$6.2-billion project, which has ballooned beyond expectations, poor management, no oversight by the government of the day. This government has brought the Muskrat Falls project back under control with a new CEO, a new board, strengthened and robust oversight. Because it's very important to the people of this province that their power rates not double.

It's not a fallacy, Mr. Speaker. It is not a fallacy that under the Progressive Conservative Muskrat Falls plan, that had it continued without us stepping in and managing the project without any plan for rate mitigation that rates would have nearly doubled. That was found to be true by the interim report of the Public Utilities Board – an entity that was kicked out by the former administration. They were so proud to kick them out and now they're modelling some of their CHEAP plan based on the information provided to them through the Public Utilities Board.

It is very fascinating, Mr. Speaker. It's a fascinating dynamic going on over there right now. They are so quick now to embrace the information from the Public Utilities Board, but you couldn't get them out the door quick enough when you wanted to ram your billions of dollars of a megaproject through – the largest expenditure in the history of this province and it is the largest public policy issue facing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but we're addressing it.

We have brought in a rate mitigation plan, Mr. Speaker. I compliment the Minister of Natural Resources for her studious and tenacious work, along with the Premier, to ensure that the seniors in Rushoon, Parkers Cove and Boat Harbour, or those who are on low incomes in Bellevue, Thornlea or Fairhaven do not have to bear the consequences of their poor decision-making, Mr.

Speaker. So, I'm very, very pleased, highly pleased, that this government has been taking steps to address the looming issues that Muskrat Falls brings. And it's something that I'm certain we'll continue to do as time goes on.

We also see one of the WHEREAS clauses in this resolution: "AND WHEREAS despite the fiscal situation that we found ourselves in when forming office we have drastically reduced our provincial deficit." Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. We set on a course in 2016. Some decisions that were taken were not easy ones and not ones that I relished in being a part of. But when you're on the edge of a precipice, when you're on the edge of a cliff and senior public servants are telling you just hours after you're sworn in that this province can't meet its payroll. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, a story like that. It would go all over the world that a province in Canada couldn't meet its own payroll. And, despite a letter from the then Leader of the Opposition, the current Premier, asking the then premier to release the fiscal details of the province on September 28 of 2015, Mr. Speaker, no response was ever given.

The people of the province voted without that information but we have taken an approach that we're going to ensure that before the people of Newfoundland and Labrador go to the polls, whenever that may be, Mr. Speaker, they will have the full financial picture of this province. There will be no guessing. There will be no wondering. There will be no pleading to release it because it has already been released.

As I said earlier, as the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi said, this is all online and people should peruse it, people should look at it, people should ask questions because that type of debate is important. That's why I believe that the Member for Bonavista was – it was a good idea that he had to bring this motion forward because it is giving us an opportunity to talk about these issues here in this Legislature, the people's House. Let me say that I'm certainly pleased to support his resolution. I think it's an important one. I think the province is on the right track.

When I hear the Member opposite from Conception Bay South saying there was a black cloud over this province, yeah, from your decisions, I say to the Member opposite. The Member opposite should take some

responsibility in the rhetoric that you employ in terms of pushing that black cloud forward.

We have to speak with optimism. We have to speak with hope. We have to ensure that young people know there's a future here, Mr. Speaker, because I'm very, very confident that there's a bright future for Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm very confident that there's a strong future for young people here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, as my time is coming to a close, I again say to the Member for Bonavista that I will be supporting his motion. Again, I say to the people of Placentia West - Bellevue, it's certainly been my privilege to stand many times in this House over these last number of years to represent them. I look forward to speaking with them in the coming weeks to continue those conversations, to ensure that my district is well served and well represented and that economic progress is our priority to putting people back to work and enabling people to stay at home, live, work and play in Placentia West - Bellevue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

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

It gives me great privilege to rise today to speak to the PMR proposed by the government.

I've said this before and I think it's worth repeating, back in 2015 I was really happy at a place in my life. Not as a politician, no intention of becoming a politician, but I was looking forward into our political landscape and I was looking at what we were about to do. Once again, we were going to elect a government on the basis that it was their turn, not that it was a plan in place.

I'm not being disrespectful to any particular Member, because there are lots of good people on all sides of this House, lots of people with great intentions, but the reality was when this administration took over power they had no

plan. There was no plan on the campaign trail. There were lots of promises, but no substantiation to that plan.

While we say they're often reflecting on the deficit that was facing our province at the time, you didn't need to be a master economist or a master mathematician to figure out when you have province that largely relies on revenue from oil royalties and all of a sudden the price of a barrel of oil goes from over \$100 down to 20 per cent of its historic value, we're headed for trouble. So for anybody to say they weren't aware of a fiscal situation that was upon them, or they were not aware of the challenges that we were going to be facing as a province is either disingenuous or it is they did not understand the concept of finances at all, which questions the ability to deal with the financial challenges of our province.

I just listened to my friend and colleague from Placentia West - Bellevue speaking of economic indicators. Yes, the economic indicators forecasted by this government in their own document of a budget that we will not have the opportunity to debate and verify through Estimates prior to the election say that things are improving. But, year over year, since they came into power they have not improved.

Their own document right here, which I have in my hand: change in retail per cent, down; final domestic demand, down; household income, down; household disposable income, down; retail sales, down; capital investment, down, double digits down; housing starts, down almost 25 per cent; and, labour force, down. Do you know what? That does not factor into the over 20,000 people of this province who have had to leave their families, friends and homes and seek employment and a life elsewhere in this country and in the world. It has nothing to do with what is actually happening.

This is just a projection. Everybody can make projections. Obviously, we do need positive projections, because when this government came into power, I can remember – I wasn't elected at the time, I was elected in the by-election – the Premier standing and describing the fiscal situation of our province. And yes, it was very serious, very grave, but I'd like to compare it to basically the same type of situation in

Saskatchewan back in the '90s. They were faced with financial challenges. They were faced with similar demographics, similar infrastructure issues and the inability to service the needs, their debt and the running of the province.

When their government came into power in the '90s they rose up to the podium and said: People of our province, we have challenges ahead of us but we're a proud and strong people with lots of opportunity, assets of our province, and we'll get through this. Do you know what the people of the Province of Saskatchewan did? They rose to that challenge. They were not knocked to their knees. They did not put their heads down. And the people of this province, despite the messaging, constant humming about the doubling of power rates, how many times have I heard that.

Actually, I'll tell you a story. The week before last I was at a school council meeting, a student council meeting at one of my local high schools. I was asking questions to the young students. I said, how many of you plan to stay here in Newfoundland and Labrador? And a portion of them put their hands up. I had asked questions why. Well, their families are here, they grew up here, they love Newfoundland and Labrador. Then I asked the question, how many of you plan to leave? Embarrassingly enough, their hands shot up with force.

So I asked one of the young girls there, I said: why are you planning to leave? Oh, it's going to be too expensive to live here. I said why. They said, well, the government is telling us that our power rates are going to double. How can we live here when power rates are going to double? That was the kind of messaging that was put out.

Finally, we get a rate mitigation concept. I can't even say it's a plan because a plan is backed up by facts, and the \$200 million from the federal government included in the government's plan is not committed. It's an anticipation. It's not even an anticipation but it's a hope, and you cannot balance the province's books or the people's budgets on hope. You have to have facts. You have to have firm commitments, which is not there as of yet.

We're looking at young students who have lost faith in this province in the past three years. I

graduated high school in 1990. Those were dark days. That was the time of the cod moratorium, over three quarters of my class graduated, went and did university locally and left the province, many of whom still haven't come back. We've come a long way from there to 2015.

Over successive governments, different flags and different brands, we have built our confidence in our own economy, built our confidence in our people and our ability to stand on our own. Over three decades we rose to the point that we were. But do you know what? In the past three years, we've lost more when it comes to our place, our feeling about ourselves as a province, than we did gain in those three decades of positivity.

Now, I guess it wouldn't be fair for me not to comment on the budget and to the roles that I look over. That would be agriculture, forestry, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and Crown Lands. We talk about the opportunities in agriculture, we talk about how even the famed McKinsey report, which comes late in the game again, and kind of really counteracts everything that's been happening in the actions of government, but there's opportunity in agriculture. But do you know what? In the budget, there's actually a reduction in funding.

I've already got producers being told that there will be no limestone for them this year – no limestone. People get up and say, well, why are you harping about limestone? Limestone is a very basic element of crop production and land development, and this year there's actually less money budgeted than there was spent last year, yet we're supposed to be doubling our production.

How can this government say that they're serious about doubling production in agriculture when the very most basic element of limestone, they've basically cut funding, they've cut funding. That's going to prohibit farmers from putting land into production. That's actually going to reduce the production of agricultural products.

In forestry, very little mentioned about forestry. We have this huge deal up on the Northern Peninsula, which, despite our questions, there were very little answers given. Again, it's a

wholesale liquidation of an asset of the province. Instead of looking at maximizing the value of that asset, we're all about getting the deal. Get the picture in the paper. Ladies and gentlemen, look what we did, we just signed this deal. It has nothing to do with those idle sawmills that are sitting around the province starving for access to fiber.

You look at Central Newfoundland. I am personally aware of two fantastic projects that were looking to be established in Central Newfoundland. But do you know what held it up? Forestry access, no access to raw product, yet in Central Newfoundland, our forest resources are approaching a point of decline. Why? Because they're not being harvested sufficiently. People are not able to access the material, they're not able to harvest the product and we have idle mills all around.

I'm sure people are going to get up following me and say, well, the previous administration tried to establish a mill in Roddickton-Bide Arm. But do you know what? No, no, no, it's not that at all. It's the people's tax money that's sitting there idle.

We need to go and change this. We need to be more positive and look at the assets of the province and go forward on that basis.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

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

I'm only going to speak for five minutes, and I thank the Member for Mount Pearl North for the five minutes. I won't be long, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to say that it's been a challenging year and I will be running as an independent. A lot of things that happened over the last year will be proven not true in the very near future with some of these steps that I have taken.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a challenging year and I heard the Premier stand up here on numerous occasions talking about how he never spoke to me during that period until I produced the phone bills – 58 minutes, 44 minutes, 36 minutes. So, a

lot of statements that the Premier made were hard to believe, actually.

I wrote him twice, by the way, very good knowing that there was someone from his office in contact with Bruce Chaulk. I wrote him twice asking to deny it. I've yet to get a response from the Premier, which I know he had a person from his office in contact.

I'm going to go on to the budget now, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**MR. JOYCE:** When the Premier stood up in this House and he said every Member is going to be treated the same.

Yesterday, something happened that I have to speak on, Mr. Speaker. It was about the rescue vehicle for Meadows. I know it was recommended, I had confirmation from the minister on four occasions that it's going to be done. I know last Thursday he said the announcement is coming out Monday. When he made the call to me in Corner Brook probably about three weeks ago that it was done, there was a person there. I know the minister, in all good intention, wanted to do that because it was a priority, because they had 131 calls last year – a seniors' home, a high school – the largest K to 12 high school. What happened was it wasn't approved; it actually wasn't approved.

So, of course, I started calling and asking questions. Do you know what I found out? I got it confirmed last night. This is sad, it's actually sad. When the Premier of this province stands up and says every district is going to be treated the same, I ask him to reverse the decision that the Premier's office made on the rescue vehicle for Meadows.

I spoke to the chief of staff last night and, yes, they made the decision. Not on the rankings from the department, not on what the minister told me, personally. I can't let that rest when a rescue vehicle with such volunteers, who do such a great work, Mr. Speaker, for a great cause, and the Premier stands in his place and says every district is going to be treated the same.

Premier, fix this what happened a couple of days ago. The Chief of Staff Greg Mercer confirmed to me that they were given a list and they picked from that list. With an extra million dollars put in, fix that problem, because you're putting people at danger, you are putting lives at danger, all for political purposes, which you said, personally, you wouldn't do.

Now, I just cannot sit down. I'll say to the people of Meadows, I apologize, because I went on the minister's word that it was done. I didn't make any announcement, I didn't tell anybody it was going to be done, but I said, it looked good, because I can only go on what the minister told me.

So I'm calling on the Premier now that these decisions, and I know when I was the minister they would come up rank, and when they came up rank, Mr. Speaker, the minister made the decision. But knowing now that the decision was made by the chief of staff, which in line makes sure the Premier knew what was going on. He has to reverse that decision because if anything happens, if they can't respond, I'm telling you, I'll be standing in this House.

It's a sad day for me when the Department of Municipal Affairs, which I was the minister of, and I was proud to be the minister of, that we asked for rank priorities, and when we got the rank priorities, we made that decision from the fire commissioner. But knowing now it's in such a political realm, I can't believe that the Premier of the province let this happen.

I call upon the Premier now – forget me, I can handle my own personal affairs – I call upon the Premier right now, reverse that decision, get that rescue vehicle, you will have an extra million dollars and stop putting lives at danger for political purposes, because I won't stand for it, Premier.

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, I'm always happy to have the opportunity to stand in my place here. Like my colleague across the way often references the people he represents, so every time I stand in my place I have to remind



those watching that I can only stand here because the good people of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair elected me in 2013, and again in a nomination in 2014, and then in the general election in 2015 to represent them. That's only been less than six years ago, but there have been a lot of changes that I've seen in this Legislature and changes in administration in that short period of time.

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands was talking about, right before I got up, the need for fire equipment and fire trucks and rescue vehicles. Sometimes we like to think we live in a democracy where the first principle of economics is that the revenue is allocated based on need and things like that, but I represent a district that we were in Opposition for about 20 years, and I can tell you it was a time in our history when this province had \$25 billion in oil money and we certainly did not see the benefit of that. When I came in here in 2013, we were driving on gravel roads, Mr. Speaker. You couldn't –

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

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** – sign on to your broadband. You couldn't check an email unless it was 3 in the morning.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No pavement.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** We had no pavement, we didn't have cell coverage and the list of things that we needed was very long. That was not because we were not a province rich in oil at that time, a have-to province.

I'm standing today for a few minutes, and I'm sure the time is going to go quickly, to speak to a PMR that was introduced here in the House today by my colleague, Mr. Speaker. It's a PMR that's talking about the Opposition finally admitting that we did inherit a fiscal mess: "THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House supports the fiscal and economic plan for the Province as laid out in Budget 2019."

Mr. Speaker, many times we have heard the Opposition get up and say: Get on with the

business of governing. Why do you keep talking about Muskrat Falls? When I look around this House because of the changes that happen in a short period time, I'm one of the few that would've been in Opposition when our government – well, the project was sanctioned in December 2012, and that's when the Opposition, led by Premier Ball, leader of the Opposition at the time, led the longest filibuster in this history.

What did the PC government do at that time, Mr. Speaker? They invoked closure and they shut the House down and they sanctioned the project. They brought in Bill 29, which got national media attention as the most draconian piece of legislation. They covered everything up, sanctioned the project, and this is where we find ourselves today because things were not done properly.

So that happened in 2012; I came in 2013. I have a copy of a PMR here, Mr. Speaker. I was the third day in this Legislature, day three for me in this House. I came from a district, representing a district that was very close to the Muskrat Falls project, happening in our backyard, and day three I was on my feet speaking to a PMR that was brought in by our now Premier, leader of the Opposition. There's a lot of talk about election the last few days. You turn on the news, the media is talking about it, people in here are talking about it and there's something about coming to the end of a mandate that makes you reflect back on your time that you were here in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, that's what I have been doing; I've been reflecting back. I pulled a few things from *Hansard* and I went back to some of the things that I talked about when I started five, six years ago in 2013. Myself and the Liberal Opposition of the day we were on our feet many, many, many times. We were \$5 billion spent two years into the project and there was still no independent oversight. I came from private business. I come from private business where my grandfather always said, if you watch your pennies, your dollars would take care of themselves. That's what I know: careful management. And I thought in the smallest project, you would have oversight. But here we have millions and billions of the taxpayers' dollars and there was no oversight. Day after day, we called for it.

Mr. Speaker, the PC Opposition today says, why do you talk about Muskrat Falls so much, and they talk about the increased taxes, and they talk about the seniors hurting. I am not a person by nature, by character, by personality that likes looking back very much myself. I always say there's a reason that our windshield is bigger than our rear-view mirror. It's because we're going forward, but we do have to glance back to talk about the elephant in the room. We do have to glance back to look at what are the lessons that we need to learn from the past.

I'll tell you, five years ago I was on my feet wondering how this province of 526,000 people was going to deal with a \$5-billion project and five, six years later I'm on my feet and what we're talking about is a \$12.7-billion project. So I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but as the provincial minister for seniors that I love so very dearly – we have one of the most rapidly aging populations in our province. I represent a district full of seniors; I have lots of seniors living in my own family. When our seniors say they can't sleep at night because they're thinking about their power bills, and I'm wondering, am I going to have make decisions between buying my pills, my dear, or worrying about my rates, I think it is important that we explain to the people of this province why we have had challenges going forward.

It's not that we are looking back. The Finance Minister brought in a very, very good budget, Mr. Speaker. We have had to do more with less since 2015, and I believe that we have done a fine job in doing that. As I move around the province, whether it's in my district as the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, or whether it's around the province as a minister in my large social portfolio, many, many people are very pleased with the job that we have done.

Yes, people talk about *Budget 2016* and it wasn't a very pleasant time to represent the province. People elected us, they had high expectations, and we take the reins of government and we think that we are facing a billion-dollar deficit. Turns out it's \$2.7 billion. Yes, things were pretty rough when we went back to our districts on the weekend, I can tell you that. But guess what? We rolled up our sleeves, we went to work under the Premier's

leadership and we started to turn this big ship around.

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Conception Bay South, when he was just up – I wrote down the time on the clock in case he says I didn't say that so he can check *Hansard*. At 3:15 he said: If you make a mistake, own it. I agree. There are lots of things that he says that I don't agree with, but he said, if you make a mistake, own it.

We talk about Muskrat Falls just because. We're going to be talking about Muskrat Falls for a long, long time to come. There are a lot of lessons in Muskrat Falls – a lot of lessons. When something of that magnitude – when they put a committee in place that would report to Cabinet and the people of the province didn't know anything about what was happening, when they kicked the PUB out – so there was the Joint Review Panel and there was the PUB. Neither of them said they could confidently say that this was the least-cost option.

They kicked them out and meanwhile, over in Nova Scotia, the UARB had the luxury of looking at what was happening, what is the best deal here for Nova Scotians, but we were not as fortunate back here at home.

In my couple of remaining minutes, I want to answer a question, for the people looking, that I have been asked many times, and sometimes we still get asked it at the doors: Why didn't you stop the project? Well, I guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, when we formed government, if there was any way that we could have stopped this project, we would. We were dealing with things like a \$5 billion loan guarantee with Ottawa. If we defaulted on that, any benefits from the project would've accrued to the Government of Canada, and we couldn't have that.

We had a cable being built to Nova Scotia in exchange for power. We had that responsibility. Mr. Speaker, we had the subsea cable in the Strait of Belle Isle. We had five major pieces being custom-built around the province for the Lower Churchill generating station. Not even to mention the legal bills and things like that we would've found ourselves dealing with. In

addition to we still needed a small supply of power.

That's what we were dealing with, Mr. Speaker, with this project; destined to fail financially for the province. That's where we found ourselves. So we cleared out many of the people with Nalcor. We cleared out Ed Martin. We brought in a new CEO. We brought in a board that had the technical expertise that knew what they were talking about, that were able to ask the questions and we got this project back on track.

The budget is a wonderful budget, many good things announced. Just today, a \$270 million housing announcement – historic investment in our province, greater money than we have ever had under housing for the people of this province over the next nine or 10 years; a wonderful Autism Action Plan, and, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to do good work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment on the remaining time, please.

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

I wasn't intending to speak today on this PMR.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, he's intending to speak for five minutes, I understand, then we'll go back to the Opposition side.

Thank you.

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

I had no intentions of getting up today, but after hearing the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, I feel I have to rise and to explain the process for fire truck allocations.

We all know there are lots of people in this Assembly who would like to have fire trucks. We had 70 requests for fire trucks, Mr. Speaker, for fire vehicles, valued at \$16 million. We have a \$2.5 million budget. So it's obvious that everybody can't get what they want. What we do

is the fire commissioner's office does a ranking for us and we follow that ranking. That's the process.

This year, we had extra money, yes, and we had extra money because we have a new program. We have three different funding streams for firefighting equipment. It could be a new vehicle at the regular funding arrangement of 80-20, 70-30, depending on the population; there could be a used truck, a used vehicle where we allocate a maximum of \$100,000 at 90-10; or there could be a \$100,000 contribution to a municipality if they so wish to go out and purchase a new vehicle, with the rest of the cost being covered by the municipality. We had applications for all three revenues.

Yes, we've been able to allocate more vehicles this year because of that new funding, but only because we have a new funding arrangement in place. We said this when we put it in place, Mr. Speaker, that the intent of this was that we would eventually catch up with the need that's out there.

I visited two fire halls on the Baie Verte Peninsula, Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, and I can tell you, the need is great out there. I saw conditions that I wish we could help them all, I wish we could. I hope that the vehicles that have been allocated, the fire departments that have been fortunate enough to receive new vehicles this year, of the vehicle that's being replaced, is worthy of it and is able to meet the need, that they see fit to be able to accommodate those fire departments who are less fortunate.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier did not reverse any decision. I want to make that absolutely clear. The Premier, nor the Premier's staff did not change the decision for Meadows. It was done the same as any other municipality. It was done by ranking from the fire commissioner's office. We took those rankings, they assessed the need, we assessed the need and we were able to provide more fire vehicles this year than any other year in recent memory.

Mr. Speaker, it's my job, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, to sign off on that. I signed off in good faith with the information that I had, and I can tell you that those vehicles that were provided this year were

ranked and they were ranked accordingly. Unfortunately, as I said, we have 70 requests for vehicles – 70. We allocated, I think it was 12 or 13.

I wish we could, I can tell you there are lot of fire departments out there today that could use a new fire vehicle. We know how important firefighting and firefighters are to a community.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make that clear that the Premier, nor his staff, reversed any decision that I had made.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

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

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

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** I'm happy to get to speak this afternoon to the private Member's motion brought in by the Member for Bonavista. The Member for Bonavista is perfectly free to bring in a motion wanting to applaud the budget of his government, but I would like to point out to the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, that in no way means that this is a debate of the budget, as he implied. Not at all.

The budget debate is a very formal process that includes many stages, includes the Estimates. So much is part of the budget debate, and that debate is not happening here before, what we now know is going happen at 6 o'clock tonight, because it's now public.

Apparently, the Premier is going to be saying at 6 o'clock that the writ is being dropped for the election. Therefore, this government is choosing to have no debate of the budget before dropping the writ when there is absolutely no need for that to happen. There is no imperative – there is no kind of emergency.

The Premier had said, and he said it again here today in the House, that he was ready to have the election anytime before the end of the school year. Well, saying you're going to have an election on the 16th is even more than a month before the school year ends. So there's no way that the budget debate could not have happened.

This is not the budget debate. We are speaking because the Member for Bonavista has decided he wanted to bring in a motion to applaud the budget. That's what we're responding to. It's an opportunity to talk about the budget, but it's not the budget debate.

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

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** So I do hope that we're not going to hear again from the government side, during the election campaign, that they had the debate because we had two hours this afternoon – far from it.

The budget, since I can speak to it, is much ado about nothing. Filled with hyperbole about our financial situation. Using language that –

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

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** – dazzles but loses its sheen when the full picture is revealed. That's what I was trying to get at earlier today, revealing the full picture.

For example, the minister in his speech likes to tout figures that say employment has gone up this year. That's true, because of construction work related to Voisey's Bay and the White Rose Project. Next year, it goes back down to where it was last year.

The minister in his speech also likes to claim our real GDP goes up significantly this year. True, but he doesn't point out next year it goes down by the same percentages it had gone up, and it's the same with the retail sales tax revenue. He says in his speech, up this year. He doesn't say down doubly next year.

That's what I was getting at with my comment. If in his speech he's only going to say up, up, up and not talk about down, down, down, then the speech is not getting the whole picture out there, and that's not fair to the public. Yes, the public can go, and they can go online and they can get the other documents, but each document should have the whole picture.

Now, that information is there. We know it's there, but people should know when they hear the speech what the true picture is. This budget has no vision. It is bits and pieces, no plan. We're hearing people saying to us, and it's an interesting word, that there are sprinklings of good news in the budget. So I'm going to talk about some of these sprinklings and I'm going to put some butts in with those sprinklings.

So, one good sprinkling – it's good – no more income support clawbacks of child support payments, mostly from fathers to mothers on income support. Government recognized that these payments are for the child, not for the parent, as other provinces have already done. However, there is no increase in income support amounts despite the predominance of single mothers temporarily on income support. It would really help them get on their feet. I don't see a gender lens happening there, Mr. Speaker.

Let's look at another good thing, another one of the sprinklings. Free eye exams for children is an important measure to ensure that all children get an early start on literacy, but why are they only bringing it in now on the eve of an election? This was important four years ago. Why wasn't it done with their first budget if, as a government, they saw this was important? It certainly had been brought up here in this House. They may even have brought it up when they were in Opposition.

The Autism Action Plan; finally, after years of this being fought by the autism association – and I don't know how many times I brought it up here in this House – finally get rid of the IQ 70 regulation, extending ABA beyond grade three up to age 21 and providing employment transition support. We've been calling for these things for years. The cost to families have been great; yet, this government is waiting until now – again, at the last minute – on the eve of an

election, four years after they were elected, to bring this in.

The Seniors' Benefit and Low Income Supplement; unbelievably, no increases since they were introduced in 2016 despite a rising cost of living. We just heard the minister saying how concerned she is about seniors. Well, why didn't she do something about that and fight for the Low Income Supplement to be raised?

The Waterford Hospital commitment is good. Everybody has been waiting for this.

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

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

It's becoming difficult to hear.

Thank you.

**MS. MICHAEL:** And the Happy Valley-Goose Bay facility –

**MR. SPEAKER:** Please proceed.

**MS. MICHAEL:** And the Happy Valley-Goose Bay facility is also good. However, there's nothing in the budget to indicate what additional, much needed, community supports will be in place apart from the two new mental health crisis units in Western Newfoundland. It's good to have those new mental health crisis units, there's no doubt about it, but there is much more needed when it comes to community supports. And I've seen how they've worked. I actually had a constituent where they had to call in that unit. I understand how it works and it is good, but it's just a small piece in community support.

The Home First philosophy has no details or money attached in terms of whether there will be more teams. In the meantime, government has been cutting home care hours, and that's the big issue. I have constituents, I know my colleague in St. John's Centre has constituents, and I'm sure other MHAs have constituents who have had their home care hours cut, and no plan for home care. Once again, as I said, the budget doesn't have vision. It doesn't have plans. It has little bits and pieces, sprinklings.

What about the new prison plan, the \$500,000? What's also needed right now, before anything is done about that building, is more counselling and addictions services in the community for people on remand and people coming out of the correction system – much needed. It has nothing to do with that building, but it is an essential part of the justice system. Why isn't that in the budget?

The government announced it is – this really gets me. This is a quote from the budget: It is improving access to affordable child care through an investment of approximately \$60 million. How does that sound? It makes it sound like new money, and the media has been reporting it as new money, but it's not new money. The \$60 million is just the regular child care budget for parent subsidies, daycare grants and early childhood educator supplements, and it's down from more than \$61 million last year. So an example of the kind of dazzling language I talked about.

The parent subsidy was extended to more families last year, thanks to a federal infusion of money – not provincial, federal. But parents are saying middle-income families are facing hardships with fees of \$800 to \$1,400 a month per child. So I put on the record, the \$60 million in the budget is not new money –

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

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

It's becoming difficult to hear the Member.

Thank you.

**MS. MICHAEL:** – it is the ongoing cost of running the program that we have.

Then there's the social and emotional learning curriculum. We don't know; will there be enough teachers to deliver it? Will there be enough teaching assistants in the system next year? It's not clear from the budget, not clear at all.

Another point I want to speak to is the heat pump rebate. It sounds good. A heat pump rebate of \$1,000, and the increase in the home energy efficiency program for low-income

people. But heat pumps are expensive. I've investigated those – very expensive. A thousand dollars is just a drop in the bucket. Many moderate income households can't afford them, and even at that, only a thousand people will be accepted. So only a thousand applications will be accepted. We would like to see more energy efficiency measures for middle-income families. Government doesn't really seem to understand how big that need is.

Mr. Speaker, I do have to ask for silence (inaudible).

**MR. SPEAKER:** Can I get some co-operation, please, from the Members. It's difficult to hear.

Thank you.

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much.

There are some things in there with regard to the economy that are good. Some initiatives to provide small business loans are long overdue, but we would like to see more seed funding available to kick-start social enterprises in particular and other small businesses that have a hard time accessing working capital.

Government applauds small businesses, and it talks about some of these social enterprises in the budget and almost takes credit for it, but without really putting in money that will really help that whole sector of our economy grow and that would be really part of diversifying our economy to really get that sector going.

ArtsNL budget increase of \$1 million is great news for artists, they need money for the initial created phases of their work. There's hardly anybody in the province who doesn't know of people who have gotten small arts grants that have really helped them get started.

It is curious that, at the same time, the whole \$1.4 million budget for property, furnishings and equipment for the Arts and Culture Centres is cancelled. So what happened? A million dollars taken from the Arts and Culture Centres and given to the artist. That's not exactly what the artists were looking for but it looks like that's what government did. That's not what they're looking for.

Another area, another tidbit, another one of those little sprinklings, the Labrador Aboriginal Indigenous nutrition and arts grant, \$50,000. This took the place of a food subsidy in 2016. Both arts and food security need more support in the North. Money shouldn't be taken from one place to put into another. New money is needed, people have to be taken care of in the North.

Then there's the whole emphasises on P3s. They're being committed in a big way, but what this government is doing is using P3s to try to help them, upfront, get institutions built without any analysis of down the road what is going to happen with regard to governments having to pay back money. That's what happens in the P3s. That's exactly what happens, but they don't care because they're going to benefit in the present. They don't care what's going to happen down the road with other governments that will have to deal with the commitments that they've made through P3s.

Neither do we know – we do know from research that it can happen – what could happen to the workforce in these P3 institutions. Research has shown that, in many cases, workers that start off as unionized workers lose that status and very often the working conditions worsen in P3s.

So, the budget –

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

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I think the Member is suggesting that there's going to be a privatization of a prison institution. Is that what she's trying to assert? I know the St. John's West NDP Association made that erroneous accusation on social media.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I'm not sure there's a point of order.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Is that what she's saying? Because if that's the case, it's factually incorrect.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I do see this as a disagreement between Members.

I'd ask the Member to please continue.

Thank you.

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

I invite the minister to check *Hansard* afterwards and he'll find out what I said.

Mr. Speaker, we have a budget that does not have an overall plan, does not have an overall vision and does not have a sense of what kind of a future we're going to have. *Working towards a brighter future* is the name, but, in actual fact, they haven't put a plan in place to get to that brighter future. They've taken a few little things that people have been asking for, for years, people have been begging for, people have been advocating for, people have been lobbying for.

Look at what happened this year with the arts community. They've given out little plums and hoping people will say: That's fine, I got what I asked for, therefore, everything is wonderful. Well, that's not the way budget planning should be. That's the way they've done it.

I'm sorry I'm going to miss the opportunity as an MHA to take part in the debate on the budget that's happening while I am an MHA.

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

Thank you.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Member who just spoke said that the budget doesn't have an overall plan. I would argue that. In fact, I would argue that very strongly because we've put a great deal of focus over the past three years on diversifying the economy. We've put a great deal of focus on creating opportunities for people to stay here, for people to come home, for newcomers. We've put a great deal of focus on creating jobs. That is what we've done. That is a large part of *The*

*Way Forward.* That is what we are going to continue to do.

Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget, we've listed numerous items that we've funded that will help diversify the economy. We've funded numerous items that will help create innovation and help create the technology that will expand our current businesses, whether it's oil and gas or whether it's mining.

For example, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources and the Premier, I can't say this often enough because I'm not sure if Members opposite just choose to ignore what's happening or if they don't understand what's happening, but the magnitude of the potential in our offshore oil industry, Mr. Speaker, the magnitude of potential because our government made a concentrated effort to do the geoscience and the seismic work in our offshore.

We made a concentrated effort to do that, Mr. Speaker, so that we reduce the risk for oil companies to do the exploration. Has that worked? Well, the answer to that is yes. How do we know it has worked? Because we have almost 100 exploration wells registered with our province, registered with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, with schedule dates that we anticipate these wells to be starting. We've got a number of companies that have given us their plans on when they're going to do exploration wells. We're waiting for those approvals, Mr. Speaker, and that is going to start.

So, with those wells and as we see those wells explored, Mr. Speaker, because we've reduced the risk, we have attracted eight new entrants into our offshore oil industry. With those eight new entrants, we have our exploration wells. We can list off the companies. In fact, they're in The Economy booklet for any Member or anybody in the general public to see, the timelines that we anticipate these wells to be drilled.

If one in five or one in six of those wells turns out to be a profitable project, Mr. Speaker, we could have 20 or more additional oil projects off our coast. Think of the magnitude of that. Think of the employment. Think of the gross domestic product. Think of the revenues for the province. So that is very solid planning. It is a very

methodical approach to making tomorrow better, to making the future brighter.

Mr. Speaker, based on the success that we've seen with our offshore oil industry, we are looking at doing some of this geological work on land. Based on doing the geological work on land, we hope to be able to go to the world, go to the global mining industry and say we believe this is our potential. Reduce some of the risk for them, give them a better understanding of what the geological potential is in our province. By reducing the risk we hope to expand the potential in our mining industry as well.

We've already started. We've seen the Antimony Mine open, Mr. Speaker. We've seen the fluorspar mine open. We've reached a deal with Vale on underground mining; a project that the potential on that was all but gone just two or three years ago. So we've done these things.

You look at the aquaculture industry. We've set a target to double the size of the aquaculture industry. We will more than double the size. We're already on target based on our work with Grieg aquaculture and Mowi, which is formerly Marine Harvest. Based on the work we've done with them, we're going to surpass our target of doubling the size of that industry.

We will set new targets to expand it even further, but with the economies of scale, it gives us the ability then to say now it's more viable to produce the feed in the province. Well, that's a spin-off industry. That's diversifying the economy. That is a spin-off industry. Now we can look at smolt in the province. That's another spin-off industry. We can look at manufacturing the nets and the caging in the province because it's more viable to do so because we have more projects. That's a spin-off industry. That has been our focus is diversifying the economy and not just on the Northeast Avalon, but in other areas of the province. You look at the success we've had, Mr. Speaker. We have had nine consecutive months of year-over-year job growth.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at what was in *Budget 2015*, they projected what 2018 would look like. We've surpassed their employment projections. We've surpassed their retail sales projections. We've surpassed their capital



investment projections, Mr. Speaker. We've surpassed their gross domestic product projections, but let me let you in on a little secret. I'll let you in on a little secret. I've studied the 2015 budget, with great interest, because I wanted to make sure I wouldn't make the mistakes the previous government did and put this province off the rail. So, I've studied that budget.

I called it last week the fudget budget, and the reason I did that is because, (a), they projected that the deficit would be \$1.1 billion. Well, we know that wasn't true. It was actually \$2.2 billion. Mr. Speaker, here's the bomb that needs to be dropped. Included in the employment numbers and the capital investment numbers was Bay du Nord. Included in the employment numbers and the capital investment numbers for 2018 was Alderon. Now, Alderon is not even sanctioned yet. We're working on it. But they put it in and included that capital investment and the employment, even though they didn't have it sanctioned.

Well, guess what, Mr. Speaker? Have we done the same thing? No. Those 85 exploration wells – and we know based on those 85 exploration wells that we're going to have a lot of people working, but that's not included. Mr. Speaker, we didn't include some of the mining projects that we fully anticipate are going to be started in our economic forecasts because we expect them to be started. When we know they're going to be started, we'll include them. They had Bay du Nord.

Well, Mr. Speaker, our government worked hard to get Bay du Nord put in place. The Minister of Natural Resources and the Premier negotiated and worked hard with Equinor to get Bay du Nord put in place. Now that we've got an agreement with Equinor – one of the things in that agreement is \$75 million to develop a deepwater centre of excellence. Why did we do that, Mr. Speaker? Because it will diversify the economy. It will create jobs. It will set up our province. It'll set our province on a course to become a global leader in deepwater oil exploration and deepwater oil production. That's why we did that: \$75 million.

We've got the deepwater centre of excellence. We've got the Ocean Supercluster. Our province

is responsible for about 50 per cent of Canada's ocean economy. Who's going to benefit from the Canadian Ocean Supercluster? Oh, it's going to be this province, by far.

We've done these things, Mr. Speaker, because we believe the province's future is bright and we are a part of making it bright. We are diversifying the economy. We are creating the opportunities; that is the theme of this year's budget. We've had announcement after announcement after announcement in this year's budget on how we're going to help diversify the economy.

I know it was a two-hour speech, Mr. Speaker, and I know a two-hour speech can probably put people to sleep. Maybe that's what happened to the Member who spoke just before me, because she missed the theme. But the theme, Mr. Speaker, is diversifying the economy, creating jobs, creating opportunities so that we can grow our population, we can grow our gross domestic product and we can grow and improve the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista, to close debate on his motion.

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

**MR. KING:** No, it's still going to be the kinder, gentler –

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Excuse me.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis does want to speak.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I expected the Minister of Finance to go a lot longer, to tell you the truth, but I guess on the budget that he brought in yesterday that it would've been –

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I know I have a very short time here today, and I'm not going to smile or anything here today because it's a sad day.

I know the Minister of Finance, who's after being a Member of this party also for many years here, sat through a lot of budget days, and I know that while he was in our party, he supported an awful lot of those budgets, and I appreciate that. I can understand that you have to support the party that you're with today. So, I understand that you can criticize on both sides of the fence, because I'm sure you did criticize the party that you're with now also, when you were a Member with this party.

But the Minister of Finance went back to 2015, and I'd like to go back to 2016. I can remember the protests up the Parkway, here in front of the – I hope people don't forget.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** We're going to be calling an election here this evening, and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I hope you remember those protests. I hope you remember what the government of the day did to the people of this province.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** They did a lot to this province.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we're the only province in Canada that you have to pay to live here. You got to pay to live in this province, and the levy was brought in, and today the people –

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Now, listen, we gave you the opportunity to speak; I never once heckled the Minister of Finance. So, give me the opportunity to speak and say what I got to say.

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

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I only have a few minutes.

You don't like to hear the truth is the problem. We hear them over there now, they're all heckling and they just can't handle the truth just before they're all ready to run out here in front and jump on the bus and go around the province.

But they got to remember that the people of this province will not forget 2016, when you tried to close libraries in all your districts. The Member for Bonavista will get up – and in districts in his place where people went mad because they were trying to close libraries down there. A hundred-year-old library they tried to close in the Bonavista district.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What minister?

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Oh, the minister that did that is gone. She's no longer there. Whatever happened, I'm not sure; I'm not going into that. But the minister, I bet he won't mention about how there was protests in his district over the library that was going to be closed.

Did he bring in a gas tax? What did we do with gas, 16 cents you put on gas? Just look at what you did in this province. You stymied the growth in this province. That's the truth. You don't want to hear the truth? This is the truth.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** This is the truth.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Just a little order.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** It's not a fact that you tried to close the libraries in this province?

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Attention!

I'd like to remind the Members that people may be watching. Let's just have a little bit more decorum. A few minutes to go.

The hon. the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, they can laugh at what they did in 2016 all they want but the people in the province don't find it funny for what happened to them in 2016 when we saw, like I said, the levy and the taxes.

Now, this week they did a great thing. They brought back the taxes on insurance, only for automobiles.

The Member got up and talked about insulin pumps. Well, let me tell you something, last night I had a call from a person in my district, a young person, and it's going to cost him \$7,200 for an insulin pump. He said, Kevin, so will I be covered? I said, I think so. I wasn't quite sure, but then I found out after by checking it out a little bit, no.

We spoke about this. We had people come into our caucus and talk to us about it. They said this is a win thing because what will happen is if people have their insulin pumps, we'll see less people in emergencies. We'll see less people have to have amputations. We'll less cost to our health care system.

So, that's what people were hoping for when they talked about insulin pumps. It's a good announcement. It's good that people who are now going to be moving into 25, that they're going to be covered, but there's an awful lot of people in this province who have diabetes and were hoping that insulin pumps would be covered for all of them.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Minister of Municipal Affairs, our leader also said that he'd cover it. Let me tell you something right now, he said that he'd cover it.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** He was putting on insulin pumps. That's what he said.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Now, what do we tell a person who is 30 years old that has to pay \$7,200 for an insulin pump after your announcement yesterday? What do we tell them? We say, sorry, it can't be done. Because that's not the way we saw it. We brought in an announcement – and that's like this budget, Mr. Speaker –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible) talking about the report.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** A million dollars in a report.

Mr. Speaker, that's what's happening with this budget. That government is not going to give us the opportunity to show what this budget is all about, to tell the truth to the people. Those people yesterday are on insulin pumps and wanted the insulin pumps covered. When they heard that insulin pumps were going to be covered they thought it was great. But, guess what? They found out the details. They found out the details and they're not going to be covered. So that's what would happen if we had a debate on this budget.

The Premier didn't want to go to an election until they get out of school. We got lots of time to debate this budget. Let's do it in this House of Assembly. The schools are still open, I was down there today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you.

And here we go; for the final say, I'll turn to the Member for Bonavista to close debate on his motion.

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

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

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

Let's listen to what he has to say.

**MR. KING:** It was actually pretty sensible until that last five-minute outburst. Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to – as Michelle Obama said: when they go low, we go high. I'm not going to comment on what was said from the Member for Cape St. Francis. I know he was just going off with his foolishness.

I wasn't going to mention this but I figure I would now since the door has been opened. Mr. Speaker, one of the slogans for the PC Party is honest government. So that's why I was shocked to see the Leader of the Opposition's name attached to Supreme Court of Canada documents that were just filed months ago, last month. Now, without knowing the details, someone might think that the Leader of the Opposition, while leading the PC Party, is also working on a lawsuit. Let that sink in for a minute.

What would the public think of a PC Leader who is suing a Crown corporation at the same time he is campaigning for office? We all see that he's already campaigning and has been for weeks, Mr. Speaker. This finding raises a lot of questions. He's signatory on a lawsuit that's suing a Crown corporation and he wants to be the premier of the province. I find that to be somewhat disingenuous and not part of their honest government platform.

The Leader of the Opposition is campaigning on transparency; yet, he has not yet had to explain why his name is showing up on papers submitted as recently as last month. I challenge him to reveal his interest in that case. If he is to benefit from changes to the video lotto terminals or elimination of VLTs, he must declare it now. He plans to change VLT games and those changes improve his chance of winning this lawsuit, he must declare this conflict now. There's something fishy with that all along, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to get back to the statement here. I'd like to thank the Member for CBS, the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, Mount Pearl, Humber -Bay of Islands, Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, Lab West, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, Waterford Valley and, last but not least, even the Member for Cape St. Francis. We talked about the Trinity Pageant. I think you won the

audition, to my good friend, and we give and take quite a bit.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close debate here, but before I do I'd like to thank the constituents in the District of Bonavista for giving me the opportunity to represent them in this House of Assembly and I look forward to an opportunity to gain their confidence and be back in here again, and I kindly ask for their support.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Is the House ready for the question?

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Division has been called.

### Division

**MR. SPEAKER:** I look to the House Leaders to give me the signal when they're ready.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** We're good to go.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Opposition, good?

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Ready.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I would ask that all those in favour of the motion, please rise.

**CLERK (Barnes):** Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Byrne, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Warr, Mr. Davis, Mr. Letto, Mr. Browne, Mr. Finn, Mr. Holloway, Mr. King, Ms. Pam Parsons, Ms. Parsley, Mr. Dean, Mr. Reid.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I would now invite all those Members against the motion to please rise.

**CLERK:** Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Ms. Perry, Mr. Dinn, Mr. Petten, Mr. Lester, Ms. Michael, Ms. Rogers.

Mr. Speaker, the ayes: 21; the nays: 9.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is carried.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** It being Wednesday, and in accordance with Standing Order 9, this House does now stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 o'clock.

And I wish you all the best.