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Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Order, please!

We do have a visitor today. It's actually a visitor and a very good friend of mine, Mr. Bruce Fraser, who is a scientist with Environment Canada. He's here for the Noia conference. Mr. Fraser and I worked together in Russia 20 years ago doing crazy expeditions into the Arctic Ocean.

Good to see you, my friend. Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today for Members' statements we will hear from the hon. Members for the Districts of Windsor Lake, St. John's Centre, Topsail - Paradise, Placentia West - Bellevue and Torngat Mountains.

The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize an individual known by many in the House, Andrew Furneaux. Members of all parties understand the vital work of political parties can never be done without the dedication of their volunteers. We, in the PC Party, have few volunteers as devoted as Andrew. His passion for politics is inspirational.

While a devoted partisan, Andrew is always ready with a hand of friendship for all. Members may remember Andrew from his time here in this House as a Page, his work in the public service or at a pub politics that he did all this with a smile and no complaint.

The Premier thoughtfully asked after Andrew recently. Andrew is battling grave health issues in hospital and I thought it right, Mr. Speaker, that we send Andrew and his family a message of our support and appreciation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

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

I rise today to pay tribute to Dana Burrige – a friend, a colleague and a teacher. Dana began his teaching career in Jackson's Arm, White Bay 1977 and retired 30 years later from Pasadena Academy.

Through my involvement with the NL Teachers' Association I knew Dana – a passionate and tireless advocate for teachers and students. Like so many teachers, dedication and service defined Dana's career and his life – dedication and service to his students, colleagues, community and family.

Dana's community involvement paralleled his teaching career and he served with numerous associations and societies. Dana was a Newfoundlander and Labradorian to the core, a master of recitations, a tour guide, pirate treasure storyteller, the keeper of history, family news and local trivia. He was compassionate and had a soft spot for the underdog. Were it not for his commitment to the NLTA and putting five children through university, he would have run for provincial politics which he had a deep interest in.

This weekend past, Dana Burrige passed away after a long and courageous battle with cancer. I had hoped he would be alive to hear this tribute but he knew the difference he made in the lives of his community, his colleagues, his students and his family.

I ask hon. Members present to join me in recognizing Dana for his commitment to the teaching profession, his community, his friends and his family.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

This year the month of June is recognized as Seniors' Month and today I would like to recognize a seniors' group from my District of Topsail - Paradise, the Paradise Adventure 50+ Group.

Since its inception in 1987, this group has been providing quality opportunities to its members and, as a result, has grown to become a well-operated and physically active group of over 150 members. This active group is primarily comprised of residents of the Town of Paradise, Conception Bay South, Mount Pearl and Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. On a weekly basis, they participate in various regular activities such as dancing, card games, shuffle board, dart tournaments and once a month they enjoy a social, which I had the honour of attending just this past weekend.

The Paradise Adventure 50+ Group is a network of supports of fully active members and is a great example of a group that is proactive, fostering both active, healthy lifestyles and close friendships among its participants.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulating the Paradise Adventure 50+ Group and wish them continued success in the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House, amongst my colleagues, to inform you of an event I attended a few weeks ago in my beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue.

I had the pleasure of attending the 66th Annual Ceremonial Review of the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps of the 121 Mary Rose in Marystown. I met with their commanding officer Lieutenant Roxanne Breon and Ms. Nora Tremblett, the daughter of the late Cyril Butler, a corps founder.

The cadets of 121 Mary Rose demonstrated their understanding of the year's training with ease. Their drill was exemplary. I was most impressed by the Colour Party. They handled their colours with such grace and one was a first-year cadet who is actually in grade six.

I presented an award to PO2 Chase Adams, a cadet who took great interest in the past year's election. I was very honoured. It was a great pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to address the sea cadet corps as it is the corps that contributed to me being the person I am today.

On behalf of the great District of Placentia West - Bellevue, I ask this House to join me in congratulating RCSCC 121 Mary Rose on their 66th Annual Ceremonial Review and wish them a great summer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This morning I had the privilege of giving the keynote speech at the 2019 Noia Oil & Gas Conference and Exhibition.

The theme of this year's conference is Realizing Our Potential; a theme that could not be more applicable to our oil and gas industry. Through investments in exploration, research and development, innovation, education, training and communities – our oil and gas industry is harnessing its potential.

Since we released *Advance 2030*, the development plan our government created in partnership with industry players, stakeholders, we have been working diligently to ensure key initiatives and priority areas are implemented. Mr. Speaker, today at the Noia conference I had

the opportunity to present an update on progress with *Advance 2030*.

More than 95 per cent of immediate priority actions are in progress or complete. Our plan will continue to position Newfoundland and Labrador as an internationally preferred location for oil and gas exploration and development – driven by an innovative, sustainable, local industry that is globally competitive, environmentally responsible, and one that maximizes benefits to the people of the province.

The Oil and Gas Industry Development Council, with representation from the provincial government, Noia, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and various industry representatives, have made a significant commitment to advancing our vision for the oil and gas industry in this province.

Mr. Speaker, our *Advance 2030* implementation update shows significant progress on immediate priority actions and specific initiatives that have been undertaken by stakeholders over the first year of the plan. Collaboration is a core principle of *Advance 2030*, and industry stakeholders are working together to realize the growth potential in our offshore oil and gas industry.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. I also would like to take a moment to thank the minister and her officials with the department for their thorough answers and discussions in the Estimates meeting this morning.

Mr. Speaker, I agree that our offshore has an immense potential, and I fully support the goal to position this province as the international preference location for oil and gas development. Our province has a strong local supply and service industry. We have a knowledgeable

workforce and we're able to produce oil in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way.

However, Mr. Speaker, our oil and gas industry and the growth in the sector is at risk because of Bill C-69. The bill has the ability to undermine the principle of joint management which the Atlantic Accord gives us. It has the ability to hold up exploration and development of projects, and thus oil and gas companies may decide to take their investments elsewhere.

I urge the minister and the Premier to stand up to the federal government and to ensure that our province is the investment of choice for the industry so that our people and our province can benefit from our resources.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. While I appreciate the minister's enthusiasm for supporting sustainable industries in our province, I must correct the minister that oil and gas are non-renewable resources; sustainable is simply not the right word.

If the minister is serious about ensuring the industry is environmentally responsible and maximize the benefits to the people of this province, government must ensure the appropriate monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are in place for this important industry.

I urge the Premier and the minister to seriously consider our call for an independent offshore safety and environmental authority as the best way to prepare for the unfortunate event of an oil spill or other such events –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

Thank you.

Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For more than 20 years, the Becoming an Outdoors Woman workshop has provided a wonderful opportunity for participants to learn new outdoor recreation skills and enhance their knowledge of fishing, hunting and other activities.

During a weekend in the wilderness, participants hone their skills with the help of experienced instructors, who teach in a variety of areas such as canoeing, fishing, target shooting, outdoor cooking, and wildlife and plant identification.

The most recent Becoming an Outdoors Woman workshop was held at the Lavrock Camp and Conference Centre on Salmonier Line. This was just the latest resoundingly successful event for the program. Over the span of 20 years, more than 40 events have been held with more than 2,000 women having completed the workshop.

Becoming an Outdoors Woman workshops are not only opportunities for women to participate in activities that have influenced so much of our province's culture, they are also opportunities for participants to meet like-minded individuals with whom they can develop meaningful and lasting connections and continued interest in our outdoor heritage.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to engaging all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the culture and traditions of our province. Through this workshop we are promoting safe, responsible and sustainable participation in all outdoor activities.

I congratulate and extend my sincere gratitude to everyone involved in making the 2019 Becoming an Outdoors Woman workshop a success, including Friends of Salmonier Nature Park, the staff of Fisheries and Land Resources, and the many volunteer instructors who have graciously given their time to support this program.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Official Opposition, I join with the minister in celebrating the success of the Becoming an Outdoors Woman workshop.

Through expert instruction, participants explore areas such as canoeing, fishing, target shooting, outdoor cooking, and wildlife and plant identification. These workshops not only increase the skill level of the participants but also promote recreational activities which can take place in our vast wilderness. For example, one individual with an interest in canoeing may discover a new interest in target shooting.

Mr. Speaker, this province offers a wide range of outdoor experiences. It is programs like these which encourage residents to take advantage of our natural beauty while encouraging safe and responsible outdoor practices.

I congratulate the participants and I thank all the instructors, volunteers and staff.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. I, too, thank the many staff, volunteers and participants involved in organizing this year's Becoming an Outdoors Woman workshop for making this program a continued success.

This workshop helps promote healthy living, increased engagement in our province's rich

outdoor traditions, and is a great opportunity for community building among women. I'm delighted to know that more than 2,000 women have already participated in this workshop over the last 20 years and I wish the program continued success for many years into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act requires that an applicant's identity is kept confidential and only disclosed to the ATIPP co-ordinator. Violation of this requirement would be a serious privacy breach.

I ask the Premier: Does he accept the denial of the Minister of Advanced Education that a privacy breach occurred?

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

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

I respond as the Minister Responsible for the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. What we're seeing today, and what we saw yesterday, is that the Members of the Official Opposition have some concerns about an alleged privacy breach that affects one of their Members.

What I would suggest is that they refer to section 73 of the act which permits anybody to make a complaint, a privacy complaint to the independent office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

I would suggest to the Members of the Opposition, or any member of the public who feels that their privacy has been breached, they should take advantage of that opportunity.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the minister for that answer.

Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador oceans industries association, or Noia, has resorted to taking out public radio ads in total frustration with the government's failure on Trudeau Bill C-69 – the no more offshore bill.

Why is the Premier continuing to ignore the voice of the leading offshore industry association in the province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, obviously, the Leader of the Opposition wasn't in the room last week when key members of Noia, as he's referring to, actually complimenting myself and the minister for the work that we've been doing with the oceans – with Bill C-69.

We've been very open and we've made our position publicly on Bill C-69. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition continues to forget, as he said here in this House a few days ago, that we refer to CEAA in a fond way. Actually, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, we're very disappointed with CEAA. We're not fond of the fact that seven years ago it was actually your buddy, Stephen Harper, that took joint management away from this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I said the Premier is fond of referring to that piece of legislation, which he's proved by referring to it yet again.

Platitudes offer little comfort to a multi-billion dollar industry that fears it will grind to a halt under Trudeau's Bill C-69. Radio ads started the day after the Premier's speech. Our invisible regional Minister O'Regan sent a ghost message yesterday to the Noia conference which was greeted with stunned silence and demonstrated his isolation.

Will the Premier now reach out to his good friend, Prime Minister Trudeau, before it's too late?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, there's one thing that has been very obvious and evident based on the conversations that we've just heard here, is that the Leader of the Opposition continues to want to make this very political.

The issue here that we're talking about is natural resource development, not just offshore but, indeed, our mining industry as well. We should never forget, to the Leader of the Opposition, that this includes our mining industry, which is where we've seen significant growth over the last few years. Our industries, through *Advance 2030* and the work that our ministers have been doing, have seen significant progress in some of the most challenging times as a result of CEAA 2012.

So when I was at that conference a couple of days ago and attended a meeting with them the same evening, there was a fair amount of optimism, I will say, about the future of our offshore resources. In this piece of C-69 we will continue to advocate, and as I said, leave no stone unturned to protect joint management for Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, the mining industry is not the industry crying out in pain over this Bill C-69.

Minister O'Regan and the rest of the silent seven have failed to protect our offshore interests. Don't listen to me, turn on the radio. There are billions of dollars in royalties and thousands of jobs involved.

Why does the Premier sit on his hands and instead not pick up the phone to Mr. Trudeau?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker I will tell you that this is a government that has not sat on their hands at all. As a matter of fact, we've been working with all people that have been impacted by this, or potentially impacted by this, but he cannot forget why we're doing this.

Every premier across this country right now, if you sit at the tables that we've been at, agree that CEAA 2012 was not working for natural resource development. Mr. Speaker, changes had to be made.

The C-69 still has a lot of work that would need to be done to put this province where it needs to be. I will guarantee you, and I would suspect every single Member in this House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, will join with us as we once again position this province for joint management under the Atlantic Accord and fight for the rights and the benefits that we deserve in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

Since this government called an early election, retroactive payments for the removal of tax on auto insurance is required.

Can the minister advise us what the cost is to the insurance companies to make these retroactive

payments, and will he ensure that this cost doesn't be passed on to consumers?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that officials in my department had consulted with the insurance industry, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that the insurance industry are more than prepared to provide the rebates, and that's the way it's going to roll out.

I don't know if there are costs, or if any costs are there to the insurance companies, Mr. Speaker, but the important thing is consumers will get the rebate of any taxes that they've paid since April 15 of this year, up to the point that this becomes legal.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I can assure the minister that the insurance companies are reaching out to us also and there is a huge cost to it.

Can you inform the consumers when they can expect to receive their refunds?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've been assured by the officials in my department who have consulted with the insurance industry that this will happen as expeditiously as possible. I guess depending on the insurance provider, some may be able to provide it quicker than others, but we do understand that they're going to get it done as quickly as they can.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

Can the minister explain what will happen in instances of policy bundling where home and auto insurance is combined and the insurance company is unable to break down the premiums?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if this is a concern or not. It has not been brought to my attention. I'm certainly prepared to ask and look into it; but, up to this point, no insurance company has contacted me with this concern.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The executive direction of the Autism Society is in the media today confirming massive layoffs and cuts to services.

Given the significant uptake in services in recent years, why has the minister continued to freeze the Autism Society's level of funding?

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

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

The Autism Society have been funded consistently over the last couple of years through combined grants from Advanced Education, Skills and Labour because of their labour market work and CSSD.

Because of the difficulties that the society had experienced, we organized a governance review which government paid \$30,000 for on their behalf, and we also gave them one-off transition funding of \$125,000 to allow them to realign their services. They are wanting to focus on what they do best, which is to support families

in a way that no one else can because of their lived experience.

We, on our Autism Action Plan, are going to take over the programming and delivery of services, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Autism Society provides invaluable programs and services that many families and clients rely on. Demand is growing. Yesterday morning, the executive director confirmed the Autism Action Plan does not include any new funding to the Autism Society.

How does the minister expect the society to survive? Does *The Way Forward* on Autism even include the Autism Society?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Autism Society board are fully supportive of the Autism Action Plan. There is \$2.5 million allocated this year, annualizing to at least \$5 million next year when we bring in the things that they asked for: the removal of IQ70; the increase in diagnostic clinics; the access to ABA up to age 21; JASPER for all.

This is a comprehensive plan which they support, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The executive director of the Autism Society has also confirmed that the funding crunch has been compounded by fundraising challenges which is

directly attributed to the poor state of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister direct some of the Autism Action Plan funding to the very group who works most closely working with families and individuals facing autism?

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

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

It's the responsibility of government to look after its citizens. It's the responsibility of the Health and Community Services to introduce the action plan which we promised. We unveiled it before the budget. It is waiting for the crowd opposite to vote on the budget, and let's get it done.

Until they vote on the budget and support it, we cannot move. This is what the people of this province voted for. This is what they told me on the doorsteps, and as soon as they get themselves into position to vote, we'll get it done, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would suspect that when the people voted on this budget in this last election they also voted that the government would support the actual agencies that directly work with clients, particularly in the Autism Society. So I would think some of that money could and should be directed towards the Autism Society itself.

Mr. Speaker, has the minister made any changes in food services for residents in long-term care facilities?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, food services in long-term care facilities are provided through the regional health authorities. They have in-

house dietary staff. We have had excellent reports from patient satisfaction surveys. In Labrador, we are introducing country foods into the menu on a frequent basis, and we even have a Jiggs' dinner and recreation pub nights in some of our RHA-run long-term care facilities, Mr. Speaker. I would argue that our food provision in those areas exceeds our own standards.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are hearing that changes were made to the quality of food items that are served to residents in the Carbonear long-term care facility.

Can the minister explain what changes have been made?

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

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

The regional health authorities are tasked with managing the day-to-day operations of our RHA long-term care facilities. If the Member opposite has an issue that he likes to bring forward around food in a particular facility, I would be happy to look into. We have received no complaints from that facility at government level. As I say, if he as a Member of this House, has an issue, or a constituent who has an issue, please bring it forward to my department and we'll look into it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have a large number of personal care homes in my district, likely the most in the province.

On their behalf, let me ask a question: Would a senior presenting with mental well-being issues such as loneliness, anxiety, depression, stress and fear of living alone be eligible for admission into a personal care home today? Yes or no, Minister.

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

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

The requirements for care needs for a personal care home stipulate a personal care need. They do not distinguish between physical or mental or psychological. We are admitting patients with mental health issues as their sole admission criteria to personal care homes for those people for whom we have a subsidy responsibility, Mr. Speaker.

What we are doing is working with both personal care home operator groups to make those criteria even more nuanced, but there have been no changes to the criteria, physical or psychological, and they are still the ones that were put in place by that crowd opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to remind the minister that crowd are the Official Opposition, the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Thank you very much.

MR. BRAZIL: Elected by the people.

MR. PETTEN: Yes, elected by the people, right.

Mr. Speaker, I heard on the campaign trail, just as I'm sure the minister and all Members of this House have heard, that seniors with mental health issues are experiencing challenges gaining admission to personal care homes.

How can the minister and this government justify to seniors of Newfoundland and Labrador that their mental well-being needs are insignificant and their wishes do not matter?

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

MR. HAGGIE: I can do little better than repeat my previous answer, Mr. Speaker. The personal care home admission criteria for assessment for level 1 and level 2 needs are based on personal care needs. They have criteria in there for mental health. They have criteria in there for physical health. They have not changed. People with mental health issues are being admitted to personal care homes.

Indeed, on the campaign trail, I heard from one of the executives of the personal care home operators' association that he had patients with mental health issues being admitted to his facilities at that particular time, Mr. Speaker.

If there's an individual who is challenged or their family is concerned, by all means bring those details to my attention and we'll look into it for them.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Obviously, the minister was on the campaign trail and I was told that the candidates weren't allowed in most of these homes. Personal care owners are very frustrated, Mr. Speaker, and we're asking the questions for them. The minister and this government will not listen but we're listening.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: According to ATIPP information, the vacancy rates in personal care homes all across the province are increasing, not because, as the minister said, the new ones are opening – only two homes have opened in the last year – but because assessments are

backlogged and mental wellness needs are being dismissed.

What is causing the delay in getting assessments completed, even for private-pay residents when there are acknowledged vacancies?

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

MR. HAGGIE: The question is founded on some interesting and erroneous facts. What I am intrigued about is that the Member opposite seems to think it's all right for a previous PC minister of Health to deny admission to a candidate to a person's dwelling place in order to inform them of their choices around the election. That happened in at least three districts to colleagues who were running for party on this side of the House. I have documented evidence of that.

Indeed, I am of the impression that there's been a complaint to the Chief Electoral Officer on that basis, Mr. Speaker. It's a human rights issue.

The facts of the case are there has been no change to mental health criteria. The reason that there has been an increased in vacancy is there have been 1,000 extra beds opened.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Human rights issue – it's been their ignorance of these seniors and their needs, that's the human rights issue, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: You can forget about all this other smoke and mirrors. That's what the issue is.

Prior to the election –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: – the minister said: If MHAs knew seniors experience difficulty in accessing personal care homes, it was their responsibility to contact him. That's sad commentary if political pressure determines which seniors are approved for admission to our personal care homes.

Why are current admission policies causing so many seniors to be deemed ineligible for admission?

I'm not making this stuff up, Minister. Answer the question.

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

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

To deal with some facts, which are always useful in this situation, there are more seniors subsidized in personal care homes this year than last year. There are more subsidies available this year than last year. Level 1 client care needs are being placed this year as they were last year.

There is a problem in that the supply has rapidly expanded at a time when the market is oversubscribed in some areas. There have been 1,000 extra beds and there are another 1,700 projected behind that from personal care home operators, Mr. Speaker.

That is the challenge. The vacancy rate is now 20 per cent. It was 17.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: So there's a bit of confusion there. These issues we're expressing, they're from the families and the residents that want to get in these homes. This is not about homeowners.

I know a lot of these homeowners in my district, they're good people, they're business people. It's about the people trying to get in these homes, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: It's about the people. This is what I keep saying, it's about the people. They need to start listening to the people.

Does the government have a plan to hijack independently owned personal care homes that have been built entirely by private business developers and repurpose them for other demands?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Please continue.

Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: How can this be justified to those homeowners? Where does this leave our seniors?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for what I think is a question, Mr. Speaker. The facts of the case are seniors who need care that can only be provided in personal care homes undergo a clinical assessment. If they have a clinical need, psychological or physical, they are then assessed for financial subsidy where eligible.

We have opened up those criteria and made that process so much simpler. People who need care and are eligible for subsidies are getting it, Mr. Speaker. Level 1 are getting in; level 2 are getting in. There are more in this year than there were last year and we are spending more on subsidies this year than last year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A personal care home in Mary's Harbour, Labrador has had its funding cut by government and are turning to fundraising to keep the lights on.

We know that in Labrador the cost of living is higher and therefore extra costs for food, heating and mostly everything, but does the minister think it's acceptable for a personal care home to fundraise to provide care for our seniors?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Small and medium personal care homes are crucial to a lot of smaller communities. The home the Member opposite references is almost unique in that it is run by a non-for-profit which has traditionally fundraised and relied on donations as well as government subsidies. They have been eligible for a small-homes subsidy and they are receiving it. We were aware of some of their financial challenges. With Labrador-Grenfell Health, who actually have the flowing of funds, we have worked with them to rationalize their finances to help them achieve efficiencies and to look at their staffing costs. We reassessed the care needs of every individual in that home last year.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I wonder if we could just have one conversation going on the floor, please.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This personal care home, of course, is encountering financial challenges. There are a lot of cost pressures with operating in Labrador,

especially when we look at our seniors, our elders, they're very important to us.

This home has asked for help with the hydro cost by being designated as consumer-based rather than business-based. The same deal on hydro is given to schools and fish plants.

So I ask the minister: What's he doing to help this personal care home address cost pressures?

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

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

The challenges around this home are in part related to its geography, but they're in part related to its size. It is a 20-bed home and it is currently full. A significant number of the individuals in there, if not all of them, are actually in receipt of subsidies. They do get a small-homes allowance.

We have commissioned a review of funding models for all personal care homes, with particular emphasis on small and medium ones, to see exactly what we can do to improve their business case and their funding. That report will hopefully come to my department some time over the summer.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DINN: Mr. Speaker, a report on Memorial University's School of Nursing has raised some troubling concerns. The panel of external reviewers found that the current building is cramped, with below-par resources and a disturbing rodent problem.

What is government's plan to deal with these serious concerns?

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question. As we all know in this House of Assembly, Memorial University has autonomy over its infrastructure and they set priorities and we're guided by those priorities that they set. They have a deferred maintenance plan that prioritizes where they want the money to go.

This provincial government, over the past year, has invested \$25.1 million in the Core Science Facility; \$10.8 million toward the construction of the Animal Resource Centre; \$2.4 million for the general maintenance of the university as a whole; and \$430,000 for the Signal Hill campus.

We're trying to do what we can, given the financial circumstances that we have, and we're willing to work with Memorial on anything that comes up of this nature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

The question was related to a specific issue that was highlighted in a report that was completed.

Mr. Speaker, during Estimates we learned that government is not giving any money to MUN for capital repairs and maintenance.

While we all appreciate the new construction and acquisitions that MUN has done over the past few years, what is the plan to address the troubling concerns with this nursing school? Can the minister table the infrastructure capital plan and deferred maintenance plan for Memorial?

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

MR. DAVIS: As I said, Mr. Speaker, Memorial University has autonomy, and the hon. Member across the way would know that. They identify the infrastructure needs that they have. They try to prioritize them. We work with them to do that, with the limited resources that we do have.

One of the things that we are doing, as I've mentioned before, we have invested in infrastructure at the university. The university has gotten (inaudible). There are some situations that are occurring at the university with respect to deferred maintenance. We're working with the president of the administration at the university to find solutions for those, working with our federal counterparts and the university on a daily basis to try to fix these solutions that the Member has highlighted.

I will remind the hon. Member that the university has autonomy over that and guides us with the infrastructure plan and their priorities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Time for one more quick question, the hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

During Estimates, we learned that \$400,000 of unbudgeted expenditure was allocated for an immigration social media campaign.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell the House was there a request for proposals for the spending of this money?

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for a quick response, please.

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member speaks out of both sides of his mouth here on the immigration issue all the time. He wants us to do more. Not allowing us to evaluate trying to get individuals to this province – it's very, very important that we reach out to the members where they are and individuals that are trying to come to this province. We want to reach out to them through social media where people are. It's an important aspect of reaching out to those individuals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Nalcor claims the North Spur is safe and stable, but at least three reputable independent experts are saying the formula on which these claims are being made is outdated and does not apply to the unique clays and soils of the North Spur.

I ask the Premier: Will he appoint, as recommended by the Concerned Citizens Coalition, an independent panel of geotechnical engineers to review the work of Nalcor, SNC-Lavalin before the reservoir is filled in August?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an important topic. As you know in the public, there has been a lot of discussion around the North Spur. I can assure the people of the province there have been over 30 geological studies of the North Spur. There have been most recent reviews of the North Spur design. The North Spur design and the dam required safety under the Canadian dam safety standards.

Mr. Speaker, these are all assurances that I can give the province. As we move forward with the Muskrat Falls Project and as we move forward with coming into first power and first light, we'll continue to assess the geological requirements around the North Spur and ensure that safety is paramount.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Mr. Speaker, a more recent formula predicts problems with the North Spur stability. International hydro expert James Gordon in his March letter to the minister said the problem of conflicting formulas could be resolved through stress-strain tests.

I ask the minister have these stress- strain tests been done and, if so, would she make the results public?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, the North Spur has been reinforced and stabilized using industry standards and requirements under the dam safety guidelines. Those guidelines are Canadian guidelines; they must be adhered to. I can assure the Member opposite it's not just SNC-Lavalin but Hatch and many, many other reviews have been undertaken, including reviews – and they're all on the website for Nalcor under the Lower Churchill Project, Mr. Speaker, if anyone would like to see those studies.

They have been reviewed. It has been reviewed by reviewers. All of this is under the engineering standards that are complying with the Canadian dam safety guidelines, Mr. Speaker. I will continue to monitor. We have MAE responsible for dam safety in the province and they'll continue to monitor as well.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Not hearing any reference to stress-strain tests and, given the potential for the loss of life and infrastructure, I'm asking the minister would she have the stress-strain tests done now.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not a dam safety expert, nor do I pretend to be an engineer. I will ask Nalcor if there has been any of those stress and strain tests that are required that have been carried out. I can assure the Member opposite that professional engineering groups like Hatch and SNC-Lavalin have done the work that is required. Their professional reputations – they have to sign off

on this requirement. They have to meet the Canadian dam safety regulations, Mr. Speaker. That is all a requirement.

We know they're stringent, Mr. Speaker, but I will indeed go back and ask if there are further things that we need to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

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

While the minister is not an engineer, she is the person responsible for this.

The Concerned Citizens Coalition submitted an ATIPP last year asking for the signed (inaudible) from engineers confirming the safety and stability of the dam. Nalcor replied that they had no responsive records.

I ask the minister: Where are the safety sign offs from the engineers?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

He's referring to an ATIPP from Nalcor, a Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker. I can't offer anything at this point in time until I investigate that particular circumstance. I'd be happy to do so, Mr. Speaker; but, again, it's an ATIPP request to a Crown corporation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The time for Oral Questions has ended.

Resenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. George's - Humber.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Resource Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed, without amendment, the Estimates of the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources; the Department of Natural Resources; the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour; and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

I'd like to thank all Members for their participation on this Committee, and the ministers who appeared before the Committee and the officials as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Sir.

Further reports by standing and select committees?

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Document

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with section 56 of the *Automobile Insurance Act*, I am pleased to submit the 2018-19 annual report of the Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities on operations carried out under the *Automobile Insurance Act*.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further tabling of documents?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Yesterday in Question Period, the Member for Torngat Mountains asked a question about policing, and I promised that I would provide a response.

I have prepared to table a statement here that the RCMP have advised that the house rented for their members in Postville was sold by the property owner and there was a vacate notice given for the end of June. Working with the town and the Nunatsiavut Government, the RCMP have identified a potential alternative location.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: I am ready.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North. Quick off the gate.

MR. LESTER: For once.

Mr. Speaker, the loss of the jawbone collection program for moose and caribou in the province has resulted in the loss of important data and research about big game. Jawbone collection represents a random sample of the entire moose and caribou population throughout the Island. The jawbone is the first indication of animal health. Jawbone data provides a clear indication of animal health, and any nutrient deficiency or disease 'compromisation' is provided through this data.

To maintain an animal resource, like the moose and caribou which are important as food sources to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and also important to economic activity in rural Newfoundland, the population needs to be sustained and managed through its food source

and its overall health. If there is no scientific data other than population surveys, we are unable to determine the health of big game animals and the physical condition of the animals or condition of their habitat.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reinstate the jawbone collection program for the moose and caribou of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is, I believe, the third time I presented this particular petition, and we did have the grace of the minister to reply to this the last time I presented. I would like to correct a couple of statements he did make in his reply. He referred to this program as being cancelled under the previous PC administration. This was actually totally false. It was cancelled in 2016 under budgetary measures taken by the previous administration, which was a Liberal government.

The economic activity is almost as important. It's probably more important than the cultural significance of the populations. How many dollars do we bring into our province when we're able to attract big game hunters from outside our province and outside our country? This is something that needs to be managed more like a business. If you're not watching the assets of your business, you'll pretty soon find yourself in big trouble. Those assets will start to depreciate and disappear.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to refer to the withdrawal of this program as shooting in the dark. Right now, big game allocations are a shot in the dark, and our shots are going to extinct that species.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, who I'm sure has a response.

MR. BYRNE: Oh, you are so correct, Mr. Speaker.

I want to verify with the hon. Member. He's talked about commercializing, creating a business sense, commercializing our wildlife management in this province. I don't agree with that.

Commercializing a wildlife management situation for our province is not the right approach, but that is indeed what was forced upon us. Because, as the hon. Member might be able to recognize, was that the stockpile of jawbones that had accumulated within the Wildlife division had gotten so significant that there was an impossibility of analyzing this data. It had to be farmed out to the private sector in some respects. So when the stockpile became so large that the analysis could not be performed, our government took action.

We are building a \$300,000 wildlife lab in Pasadena to be able to create the resources, the environment to do the right work for wildlife and wildlife management. That's the right approach; not commercializing, not privatizing, not creating the business case for our wildlife management as he suggests.

This should be held within the public sector, the public sector, Mr. Speaker, but what the previous administration did, they were so concerned about our wildlife, they would only conduct two to three moose surveys on an annual basis. What did this government do last year? We did nine moose surveys last year, but we're going to bring it up to an average of five each and every year.

We are protecting our wildlife, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: That's great.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

WHEREAS current means of transportation for persons who are unable to access conventional transit due to disabilities and accessibility challenges that are inefficient, expensive and inadequate; and

WHEREAS the availability of a suitable transportation system is crucial to the enhancing

and participation in all aspects of community life, accessible, affordable transportation must be provided in a dignified and respectful manner; and

WHEREAS throughout the province individuals living with mobility challenges identify transportation as one of their greatest needs;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows:

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take a more proactive approach to ensuring affordable and inclusive transportation is available for all individuals who experience accessibility challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I've met with a number of groups in the last number of months advocating for the visually impaired, advocating for those who have mobility issues, and the key concern they have is access to affordable, reliable and frequent transportation.

If we really are truly trying to promote a more inclusive province than we need to look at expanding our transportation services and coming up with different modes of transportation that address the needs of our individuals that have issues with accessible transportation and getting around.

I sat in with a group on visual impairment and we actually conducted a meeting blindfolded. That's just a two-hour meeting. I can't even imagine if you're dealing with that on a daily basis in terms of trying to get around.

Most of these individuals – not all – are elderly, but then you also have a younger population dealing with similar challenges. These people want to be involved in their communities, want to get to where they're going. They want to contribute to the economy. They want to contribute to our volunteer community but, unfortunately, they're unable to do so because they can't get to the places they would like to get to.

We know just looking at seniors alone, by 2025-26, over one-quarter of our population will be 65

plus; 45 per cent of 65 plus live on the Avalon Peninsula. So, transportation has to include accessible transportation; has to include affordable transportation.

We've taken many steps in the right direction; we're not there yet. Taxi cabs are more accessible, but they are expensive. We have services like the GoBus that can get around, but it doesn't go everywhere.

Again, this is a serious issue for this population and I'd love to see us do something more on this.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development for a response, please.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the hon. Member for the petition because it gives me an opportunity to stand and talk about some of the work we are doing around inclusion and accessibility, Mr. Speaker. We're certainly committed to working with community partners to ensure that our programs, policies and services are responsible to the needs of those in the disability community, to the needs of seniors in our province.

The Member did reference some of the work we're doing around the accessible taxi. I remember when we launched that in the summer of 2017. Yes, you have to pay to get in a taxi, but there were some pretty powerful stories of people who didn't even have that option to call to get out, whether it was getting to a wedding, to a funeral, whatever, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to the accessible taxis, we have the Newfoundland and Labrador Community Transportation Program. We've done some work with Metrobus. There's also a program where individuals may be able to apply for an accessible program. I believe right up in your area, Mr. Speaker, in Lake Melville, we've seen a lovely story there of somebody who was raising funds for an accessible vehicle and we were able to come in and assist with that.

Is there more we can do? Absolutely. There is always room for improvement, but it's certainly a priority for us. We value inclusion and we will continue to do what we can with the accessible community. There's certainly a whole other list of things I could – time won't permit me to outline the things that we're doing for the seniors' population, recognizing that is a growing large percentage of the people that make up Newfoundland and Labrador right now.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

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 the 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 all 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. 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.

Today's petition is signed by people from Victoria Cove, Coomb's Cove, Clarkes Head, Musgrave Harbour, Carmanville, Twillingate, Cottlesville, Gander Bay, Gambo and Herring Neck. As we continue to present these petitions

day after day, as you could see they're coming from every region throughout the province. I would suggest there's probably not someone from a community anywhere in Newfoundland and Labrador now that hasn't signed this petition.

The reason for that is because we're all impacted by this. We all have moms and dads and grandparents that are in long-term care. We all know people with family members in long-term care, and one of these days it could impact you or I personally. So it is a very important issue for people. We need to make sure that we take care of our seniors, particularly seniors that find themselves at a point in their lives where long-term care is required. We must ensure that there is adequate staffing there to provide those people, those seniors, with the care that they require. It's not asking really for a lot. It's just to ensure that there are appropriate staffing ratios in place.

There's certainly a lot of anecdotal evidence that would suggest that that's not always the case and really it's ensuring that that will be the case in the future. I support the petition and the group presenting it. I thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to stand again to present a petition on behalf of the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador concerning the hospital in Corner Brook.

WHEREAS the successful proponents of the new hospital in Corner Brook are scheduled to be announced this spring with construction anticipated to begin this fall and, as this is estimated to be a four-year construction period, and there are experienced local tradespeople and labourers in the area;

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to encourage companies that are awarded the contracts for the new hospital to hire local tradespeople and labourers, at no extra cost to the taxpayers, so that they can work in their own areas, support their local economy and be able to return home to their families every evening.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are here are St. John's, Harbour Grace, Clarenville. It's not just Western Newfoundland that people are looking; there will be people from all over the province. There is St. John's and Marysval (inaudible). So there are petitions from people all over the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm encouraged by the minister who said that they're going to work on trying to get up to 90 per cent of the local employment in the area. I'm encouraged by that and I understand he's working with the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association and Trades NL. That's very encouraging signs that government is working with it and the minister personally is getting involved, and I thank the minister for that.

I'm just hoping, Mr. Speaker, that this year when it starts, there won't be any need for a big protest to highlight this issue. This why I'm presenting the petitions to try to ensure that we all work together somehow, some form with the companies, with the government, with the unions, with the local people who aren't in the unions so that we can head this off so when construction starts, we can all have and ensure that the best benefit for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are going to be at the hospital in Corner Brook.

They're very experienced. They're very good tradespeople. They're very good labourers that can do the job as well as anybody can do the job. So I'm just encouraged by the Minister of Transportation and Works, his involvement with it and I understand, as the Premier said, the announcement is going to be in a couple of weeks. That was eight, 10 days ago, so I'm assuming it's going to be made soon and there's going to be a great announcement for all of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially the West Coast.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day, Sir.

Orders of the Day

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

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

At this time, I would call from the Order Paper, Motion 4, the Budget Speech.

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

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me a great honour once again to rise and speak on behalf of not only the District of Mount Pearl North, but the people of the province. It's always a pleasure and a privilege to be able to stand here and represent the issues that face our district and our province.

Of course today we speak to the budget – the budget that almost was and is yet to be. This is probably the longest duration of introduction of a budget to the passing of a budget and, in the meantime, the province stands in limbo. Not only has this theatrical staging of this budget debate put many people and organizations in compromised situations because they're waiting on the approval of funding to go ahead with projects or approval of funding to keep their staff employed, this is another situation where our economy is falling victim to political theatrics.

If we are truly intent and have the virtuous agenda of making this province a better place, that is something that basically has to disappear from our whole political landscape. And how we accomplish that may be something that we will not be able to figure out in our lifetimes, but, my gosh, I think we should die trying.

A lot of people have said to me it's a minority government and a minority government is going to be good for the people. I guess in theory, yes, but my concern with a minority government is that we will not be bold enough to make the assertive decisions that are necessary to keep this province going in the positive – actually, to put this province in a positive direction. We have ample resources, be it human, be it natural, whatever it may be, we have potential. Is it intellectual? Yes, we have all those resources, but we need to facilitate the environment for the opportunity for those resources to be capitalized on and generate profit right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to share with you a little story that I often reflect on. It took me quite a while to really apply this situation to life. We'll go back some 35 years ago. I was not even in my teens and, as I often did, I went to the barn with my grandfather, and today was the black book day, this particular day. Black book day was when my grandfather went up and down the aisles of cows in the barn and looked at his paper and saw how much milk the cow gave and decided whether, yeah, okay, she's paying her way; we'll keep her around.

If you didn't make the grade, then you went to a higher purpose if you were that cow. Finally, we were moving along the barn and we came to this one cow and everybody knew which cow this was. This was Pabst Duchess; that was her name. This particular cow was a descendent of the first cow my great-great-great grandfather had bought. So her lineage had been in our family for almost six generations at that point.

You could tell that she was pretty much of an archaic beast because she was shorter and she was chunky; didn't have quite the same characteristics as all the rest of the modern-day cows. My grandfather shook his head when he looked at the paper and he said Jamsey – that's what he used to call me at times – this poor old girl doesn't even give enough milk to colour your tea. So it came to the point where, this cow, not only was it revered as part of our heritage, part of our existence as a farm in Newfoundland and Labrador, not only was our immediate farm family concerned with the existence of this cow, even our distant relatives: Oh, you know, is she still there? Is the family line still carrying on?

It was a big decision to decide well, listen, you have to go – poor ole Pabst, she hadn't had a calf in four or five years and she was just idling along. This was back in the late '80s when of course our farm, like most farms in Newfoundland and Labrador, were really feeling the pinch of high interest rates and it was tough. I mean, we came to a point at one time where we were contemplating having to leave this province and set up business elsewhere and sell off everything we had here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I went home that evening and I was really disturbed that we were going to have to sell Pabst Duchess. I got up the next morning, as I often did, and went out in the barn with my grandfather and I said I was going to bring it up to my grandfather. Now my grandfather was probably four inches taller than I am now and a good bit heavier so even though he was a big, burly man he had great set of ears, always listened.

I said to him: Pop, you can't sell Pabst Duchess. She's part of our family; she's part of our history. He said: Jim, there comes a time when you have to make a decision and it's a decision for the future. Yes, history and past is good to remember but once history and past starts to affect what could be done in the future, well that's when it's time to cut loose. So poor ole Pabst Duchess went aboard the truck that day and that was the last we seen of her.

Now, why am I talking about cows here in this hon. House? Well, Mr. Speaker, we're in a position right now, as my grandfather was in the late '80s. As a province, we have lots of resources. Yes, huge potential for the future, but we have to make decisions that we ensure that the future is there for us to capitalize upon and take opportunity of.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my opening statements, even though we're in a minority position, we, collectively, as a Legislature, must act as the biggest, most firm majority that has ever existed. We must fearlessly go forward and make the decisions that are needed; needed to put our province in the right fiscal place. Where that is, is where we have no deficit no more.

It's said almost to the point that I'm almost going to quote the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. It's almost been quoted to the level of ad nauseam. We don't have a revenue problem; we have a spending problem. Do you know what? No, we don't. We have an indecision problem because we haven't done anything about that spending. That's where the problem is. We know we need to reduce expenditures, but where are we going to decide to get rid of the expenses to bring us back in line with our budget?

Another thing that's often been said: Well, you wouldn't operate your house like it and you wouldn't operate your business like it. So, why are we continuing to operate this province like it? That's a good question. The answer to that question is probably something that we, as legislators, need to look in the mirror and ask ourselves that, and I'm sure we'll realize that we need to take the politics out of our decisions and put the practical in.

Now, yesterday, the Minister of Finance said we're addressing our debt. No, we're not. We're addressing that we have debt. We're acknowledging that we have debt. We're increasing our debt. We're only servicing our debt. We're not amortizing our debt.

I'm sure all of us can, I guess, relate one time or another when you look at your credit card statement and if you have to carry a balance from one month to the next on occasion, and you look down at it and say: Oh, gosh, if I make this minimum payment, I'll pay my \$1,000 off in 75 years and three month. Well, guess what? When we look at our financial statement, there is no amortization period. There is no plan to pay down the debt. We are only paying interest, which I stand to be corrected on because I thought it was our third biggest expense, but wrong, it's actually our second biggest expense.

Do you know what? At the rate we're going, one of these days I'm sure we'll be able to say it will be our largest expense.

Mr. Speaker, I was quoted as saying, yes, I'm in support of jurisdictional scans, and, yes, that is true. I am always in support of any sort of investigative action that will apprise us and enable us to make the best decision possible, but, again, there's the word: decision. The

decision has to be made. We cannot use a jurisdictional scan to say, okay, well, we're third best, that's satisfactory. We need to aim high. We need to aim that we are the best. We have to make sure we are the best, our people deserve it.

Jurisdictional scans are information-gathering tools. They're not to be used as a delay tactic or a tactic to make us say, well, you know, we're not as bad as them. We're not as good as those, but we're not as bad as seven other provinces. That's not acceptable.

When you look at another region or another jurisdiction, you must think that, well, you look at their successes and their failures. When we produce our own, as a province, our own direction, our own policy, we have to look just as certainly on the failures and the successes.

I know in our business, when we go on to something new, we often highlight more investigation into the negative because it is a true tragedy if a business or policy will fail because of a mistake somebody has already made.

Mr. Speaker, last week, what's come to light in this House and in the media has been the study by Goss Gilroy. There was a fair bit of scrubbing on that material and one of the big phrases that was scrubbed out was the reference to cronyism and nepotism.

Cronyism and nepotism in itself is a big fear when it comes to investment. As a business owner, if you're looking at investing in a business, be it in this province or anywhere else in the world, you do a business plan, you line up what you can forecast as being risks and what directions that you feel will be most positive to take your business in, but all of a sudden, you have cronyism and nepotism thrown into the pressure of an already stressful establishment of a new business.

That's a non-game starter for many people, and so it should be because that cronyism and nepotism has no real pattern or real direction because that is where the government picks the winners. It may not be the best application. It may not be the most successful or the best business idea. It is a political action based on no

merit at all, no substantial merit and no credible merit.

I can tell you a little personal situation that I'm aware of actually. A couple of years ago, there was a gentleman who decided to get involved in politics. Him and his family, they had a very well-to-do business. It was growing. There was a future there for the next generation. Their business was largely based on use of land. This one particular piece of land, which the enterprise was leasing, it came up for sale, and the business tried to buy that land, but, unfortunately, they were not the successful bidders. They were outbid by another bidder.

Mr. Speaker, you wouldn't guess who the other bidder was. It was actually a government. A government outbid that enterprise. So, all of a sudden, we now had political interference in private business. Now, what business person in their right mind would invest in an economy when government interferes with private business? Not a good plan of action.

Well, Mr. Speaker, do you know what? Not only did that decision to purchase that land compromise the existing viability of that enterprise, the government actually allocated that piece of property to the business's competition. Now, all of a sudden, that business lays off six people; lays off six local people because they did not have the land any more to continue to produce the employment hours for those six people.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker. That other business that took over that piece of property brought in six temporary seasonal workers who have no interest in becoming Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The only interest they have in Newfoundland and Labrador is to get their paycheques and take them back home. Now, is that sustainable, Mr. Speaker?

Okay, so beyond that, Mr. Speaker, the nepotism and cronyism, let's look at the surf clams. Same situation, politicians interfered with a very viable business, a very viable industry and stuck their fingers where it didn't really belong. That, again, shook the confidence in our fishery, shook the confidence. Should I invest in that boat? Should I invest in upgrading my plant? Should I invest in the future in the fishery when

one day some politician can wake up and say, I don't think that business is one of my friends. I think this one's my friend, I'm going to give them the quota instead.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, that was a situation with the surf clams where the ethics commissioner got involved. It was not the actions of this government that reversed it. It was the ethics commissioner.

Why did the ethics commissioner get involved if there was nothing wrong with that decision? Do you know why? Because there was and we all know it. Those are the types of things that shake the confidence of our economy and business people investing in our economy.

Our unemployment rate is one of the highest in our history, but yet we also have the highest vacancy in certain levels of jobs. Through the campaign and going door to door, I came across many young people, able-bodied young people, and I said: How's life? They said: We're loving it here, don't have to work, everything is taken care of. I said: But there are help wanted signs all over our town, all over our district, why don't you go out and get a job? They said to me: It doesn't pay to get a job. If I go get a job I'm going to lose this, I'm going lose that, I'm going to lose where I live. All those types of things have created that void in that bottom echelon of jobs.

Minimum wage jobs and minimum wage, plus a little bit, jobs, some people – and I'm not one of those people, I was always taught that if there's a job to do, that's an important job to be at. Those jobs need to be filled. They need to be filled by people who are not working and are able to work, but because of the high cost of living here in our province, people have got themselves in the shelter of the social system. They have to put themselves there.

A lot of times, when you look at it, as I said, I look at most things on a business case. If I look at, okay, well, if I go to work and I have a family of two or three kids and I have to pay daycare, it's not even worth my while to go to work. I'm better off taking care of kids myself.

Our party has suggested, through its platform and through asks of, let's look at child care, let's

look at that. We need to put that in for our people. That would get people to work. That will fill some of these vacancies that exist. That will remove people from the social system. That will put them back to work so not only can they contribute, economically, but they can contribute to their own self confidence.

The Finance Minister referred to my colleague, some of his suggestions in a former role, as being draconian. I'm sure that everyone in this House, although some may not admit it, everyone in this province, that the levy was the most draconian action ever taken by government in our history. Basically, you are taxing people's success. You're not even taxing the people's success, you're taxing their existence. They didn't get anything for it, you're taxing their existence.

Mr. Speaker, as my time winds down –

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. LESTER: I can speak for hours, and if the minister of – whoever it was, I can keep going.

While I've been slightly critical –

MR. OSBORNE: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LESTER: The Minister of Finance is chipping me about Muskrat Falls, but do you know what? Ladies and gentlemen, he voted from Muskrat Falls.

MR. OSBORNE: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LESTER: I forgot. As he said, he was duped.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm losing control.

Order, please!

MR. LESTER: While Muskrat Falls is being talked about, we have to look at that in a different lens. We have to look at that as a positive asset to our province. We have to look at, okay – and again I stand to be corrected on my division of power – a third of it we need; a third of it we've committed to Nova Scotia. There's one-third we hope to sell on the international market.

Well, as I said many a time in this House, I hope we do not sell enough to power a toaster across that Gulf. I hope that every kilowatt, every little bit of it is used right here in this province, this glorious Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, where we can put people to work. We don't have to live and survive off royalties and the stimulation of government spending to sustain our economies. We need real business people out in the economy creating jobs. We need people looking to the future, thinking about investing in their own businesses; thinking about investing in assets throughout the province, not people thinking about a way out.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, it took us four decades to get up off our knees, and I sure as heck hope that we don't have to do it again.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand and have a few minutes on –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: I know, Mr. Speaker, when I speak, they all get excited. I can understand. They're only human.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stand just to have a few minutes to speak on the Budget Speech also and some of the things that are in the budget. I heard the Member give a great speech there

talking about how we should take politics out of the budget. I don't want to mention the Member's name here, but I remember one Member in the PC side who took \$500,000 out of the Transportation budget and put it in the PC district before the election and there was a serious road problem. I wrote the minister on numerous occasions – he's sitting in this House, I won't say his name – I was sitting in this House on many occasions and I even said, keep the \$500,000 but fix that road. It wasn't done. There were two accidents, three accidents on top of that with the ruts going up the road.

So please, when you want to talk about taking politics out of it, talk to your own caucus first. Once they agree to do it, we can reach out more, because I could tell you, that was a safety concern that I brought up on many occasions that should've been done for safety reasons. It was approved, the tender was approved, the money was awarded and they were out there starting the work.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: I know the Member is saying I'm right, I know, thank you for that, because you were here also when it was brought up before and I supplied the documentation. I know that.

I agree, by the way, we should do things for the right reasons. I'm a firm believer in that. Do people think that there's not politics creeps in sometimes? Sure it does. If you're involved with any business, any business whatsoever, sometimes you got to say, well, we got to make a decision but it should never be a life or death decision over politics. We should try to sit down, and the criteria, let's try to do things properly. So, sometimes politics do creep in. We're all human. This is politics. But we should make decisions in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Before I go any further, I just want to thank, again, the people of the great Humber - Bay of Islands for electing me again in this General Assembly. I've been humbled winning with almost 70 per cent as an independent. I have a lot of support in the district, a lot of friends, family that came out to support me and I'm so proud that they did.

In the budget, there is no doubt, I say to the minister, it's always a balancing act – absolutely no doubt. I've said on many occasions if the Minister of Finance, who I'm looking at right now, had to just take any four of us right here, if we wanted everything done in our districts that we go and lobby for, there wouldn't be enough money in the budget of municipal capital works just for four of us. So that's where the balancing act comes in.

We can't get everything done in this province, no matter if it's a Liberal government, if it's a PC government, NDP, we just can't do it. We have to make the priorities of the government itself. We have to take care of the basic needs, life and safety and health. We have no problem with that. I understand the balancing act the minister has to do.

I know the Member who just spoke, spoke about the Member and the Minister of Finance, talking about he voted for Muskrat Falls. I did it before, and I know my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, my good friend now, I have to say –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. JOYCE: I said it publicly and I'll say it again – and this goes to the Minister of Finance, this goes to the Member, and I would say there's probably one, maybe even two. They were not given the information on Muskrat Falls. When you listen to the inquiry – and I know when we were in government and we were going across saying, well, you voted for it, you voted for it, and I know the Minister of Finance. But when you hear the information coming out of the inquiry – and I said this publicly before – I feel the Members, the three or four Members that were in this House at the time, did not have the correct information, and it's obvious in the inquiry. So I said it, I made a lot of statements, because I assumed they did have the information, but through the inquiry, you never. So we all know now how much it is and how important it is to have all the information out before you make an informed decision. This is just for all the Members that were in the House of Assembly at the time.

So, Mr. Speaker, in the Humber - Bay of Islands there are a lot of needs. Some of the needs go

with capital works, water and sewer in Lark Harbour. I know Ms. Gudie Hutchings, the MP, is looking at making an announcement soon on that. Hopefully there will be some money there for Lark Harbour. Also, there are some needs there in Humber Arm South. They had some needs and I think that was approved through capital works program, so that was already announced, the capital works funding for Humber Arm South. Mount Moriah has some major concerns also with one of their roads and some water, a major issue with the water. When you go on the other side, I know there's funding there for Hughes Brook also that was already announced last year to upgrade their water station and their pump house. When you go further on down, there's money.

So there is money available. Irishtown-Summerside there's a fair amount for water and sewer. But I can tell you there's not enough here to satisfy all of our needs. It's just not there – just not there. So this is why we have to set up a ranking system which is set up to ensure that we do the best that we can for the money that we have in the province.

I know McIvers is looking for a lot of money in the area and I'm very pleased that hopefully they'll receive some this year. I know that once we get the federal government approval, there will be announcements all throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. But when you look at the budget itself – and I know the Minister of Transportation and Works, he's working with a lot of his own people to help out on Route 450. There is a spot there in Copper Mine Brook that is actually fell. I have pictures there for him. There's about a foot dip. This is no knock on any worker in Transportation and Works. This was, what they call, active underneath the road and this happens every 10 or 12 years and it will happen again. I brought it to the minister's attention. He's working on it.

Also, with the major floods out in the district, Mr. Speaker, the work wasn't done, through no one's fault, only Mother Nature and the weather, and that is being done. I just want to let the people know who are listening that they're out there working on that in Frenchman's Cove now and also they're working on that in Johns Beach with the big culvert that was – with the major flood.

There are a lot of things happening in Newfoundland and Labrador. I mentioned yesterday about the fish plant in the district, the high, very high employment, Mr. Speaker, extremely high employment through the fisheries and I'm grateful of that. I know there are a lot of policies that were changed to help with that. If there was only some way we could get some secondary – it's not doing the secondary, it's having the markets for the secondary at the rates that they can get it done. It is something that I know that everybody is working on.

Mr. Speaker, we spoke yesterday on the levy, and I agree, the levy was a tough measure. I was a part of it, I don't shirk away from it. It changed a lot. It was a tough measure, but the government committed that in 2019 the levy would be taken off and it is going in 2019. That was put in legislation. That was the commitment that we made that we would have it in legislation and the government is following through on that legislation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: It's just a little difficult trying to hear the speaker. If I could have some co-operation, please.

Thank you.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, that's just applauding because the levy is gone. I thank the Members opposite for applauding me on that because it was a commitment the government made.

I ask any politician in this room: Who wants to make people upset when you got to go back to the electorate? Not one. Sometimes you got to make a tough decision. I know, at that time, there were decisions that were made and, in hindsight, if we had a bit more time, we would've made different decisions. There's absolutely no doubt, but when you're faced with a crisis that you're coming in here and you find out in January 2016 that what was being said out in the public during the election is not the same that was put in there. Mr. Speaker, you've got to make some major, tough decisions. You have to make major tough decisions. Government, at the time, made tough decisions.

Where they liked? Absolutely not. Where they the best for the province? We could have done things differently but, at the time, it was the best for the province to put the province on a financial stable basis, Mr. Speaker.

I remember after we announced the budget, I went out and the first night I had a speech, probably that was Thursday night, Friday night I went out and had a speech and I told people: Here's what we had to do and the reasons why, here's why. When I explained it out, no one liked it, absolutely no one liked it, but a lot of the people that I spoke to understood why we had to do it as the government.

The taxes on the insurance also is another thing. The first possible opportunity that we can see that would be taken off, and that was done. Again, gradually, as you get on a more financial stable footing, you can make those decisions of some of the harder measures that you had to take at the time. I know the government is looking at that.

I look at my time as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and I had a great time. I enjoyed meeting with municipalities. I enjoyed meeting the towns. There are some people in this room that I met with at the time and we worked well together; we worked well.

I have to say on both sides, there are a lot on the Liberal side, not too many on the NDP side because it's mainly St. John's and you deal with the mayor because it's not as much as the town, but I know a lot of Members here on the PC side, when we were working together for councils, we all worked well. We all took off our hat, put our hat aside and said: What's best for the town? That's the way it should be.

I know many Members in the Liberal government now, when we went into municipalities, as the minister, whatever differences we had, we put them aside in that room and we worked for the betterment of the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's the way it should be.

I know when I was dealing with Duane Antle and the firefighters' association, we brought in presumptive cancer. That was a big issue for a lot of volunteer firefighters across the province;

6,500, and the professional firefighters. That's the kind of decisions that government made, even with the financial strains that you had, you always find a way to get other things done.

Also, Mr. Speaker, when you look at MADD Canada and the improvement that we made and the regulations that we made. I remember first meeting with the group from MADD, I think we were the lowest in Canada in ratings. Within a year, we were on the top again because we took the bull by the horns and we realized that drinking and driving was a major issue in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we wanted to ensure that we were going to make sure that Newfoundland and Labrador wasn't at the bottom of list. The government, as a whole – I may have been the minister, but the government, as a whole, went and said, okay, we support you on this, and we made some major changes to legislation.

I look at municipalities, I'll give a good example, Mr. Speaker, of how people understand. Some people in this room may have been at the meeting. I remember when we changed the cost-shared ratio in the Capital Works and we put down roads 50-50 and buildings 60-40. I remember then there was a big outcry. What it was, why we did it. We put water and waste water as a priority and we wanted to leverage every cent we could from Ottawa; every cent we could we wanted to make sure we got that from Ottawa.

I tell you why, because when we walked in in 2016 – this is something I'll never forget – we walked in in 2016, when the Canadian infrastructure fund – this is very important, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian infrastructure fund that was in place, only province in 2016 that never used one cent of it was Newfoundland and Labrador; couldn't leverage one cent of it, couldn't leverage it because of the financial position we were in.

I remember walking into the department and they had something there, it was supposed to go to Ottawa, \$34.6 million ready to be signed off but the government never had the money to leverage any of the federal funding. That was the financial position we were in in 2016.

I remember changing it around and saying, okay, we got to get this money. Right away, the money started flowing. We signed it off. Went to Ottawa and got it done, but I remember changing the cost-shared ratio and making water and waste water so we could get every cent from Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, I remember MNL had their biannual convention out in Gander, and some of the Members that are in this House were out there. They were upset about the changes. I said to the group at the time: I'll come out and talk to you about it, I'll come out.

I remember on a Friday night, I said put one hour aside, I'll stand up and answer any questions. I got up and had a few words and I explained what I just did, the reason why we had the change it to get every cent we could from Ottawa for leverage, every cent. I stood up and I explained it to them. I said here's why we had to do it, no one wanted to do it but we had to because 72 per cent, 73 per cent of the applications that Municipal Affairs received is for water and waste water and we had to ensure that we leveraged every cent.

By the time I finished, 20 minutes later, explaining, going through the whole gamut, I had four questions. Three of them were on Crown lands and one question on when are we going to try and get the ratio back. I explained to them when we would try to change the ratios back.

So, when you explain the situation that you're in to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, they understand. They accept it. MNL, at the time, they didn't like it but once you explain it to them, they came part of the decision that we made. Once you become part of the decision that you made, then they understand more.

The electorate in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are a lot wiser than a lot of us give them credit for. They understand. They have a household. They understand when your bills are piling up. They understand when your credit card is getting too full. They understand when you have a priority: do I get a new car this year or do I do the siding on the house. They understand all that.

What we need to do, and I always said it, is it's better to be honest and up front and they'll respect you for it. They may not like it, but they'll respect you for it. So that's my message today.

I know the people in the Humber - Bay of Islands are very supportive of both governments. I'm not being critical here of the former PC government because there are a lot of things happened in the Humber - Bay of Islands, too, under the former PC government also.

What you'll find on many occasions is that everybody gets the impression that we don't get along in this House, but we do. We do. There are times we're going to have our differences, we all do, and everybody knows we do, but I can assure you, I can name people I dealt with in the PC government when I was in Opposition, that there were major improvements in the District of Humber - Bay of Islands and Corner Brook.

I know now with the current government, working with a lot of current ministers and Members, a lot of backbenchers have a lot of potential also, that there are still improvements. We're lobbying together, and I'm very proud of that. I always said before that once you put your differences aside and look at what is the main priority, it's not hard.

Mr. Speaker, of course, I can't leave without having a few words, and I promised the people of Humber - Bay of Islands, about the situation that I found myself in a year ago. I always said I was going to stand up every opportunity, so I'm going to take the next two minutes and just speak about the situation I found myself in a year ago, a year and a half. Just one thing, and I promised the people of Humber - Bay of Islands I would – they wanted me to. If you knew every door I knocked on there, if there wasn't nine out of 10 that said: Ed, stand up and defend yourself.

I'm going to read a little text message from Mark Browne about a certain person who made a complaint against me. Mark Browne read it to me. Here's what we had going on, Mr. Speaker, and talking about how I'm going to hold up the swimming pool in Placentia. This text was in April, April 11 or something. For everybody to know, the swimming pool was approved in the budget, approved by Cabinet. It was announced

in the budget and it was done, but I was accused of holding up the swimming pool in a text message to Mark Browne from the person who made the allegation.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I just remind the Member about drawing reference to members who are not in this Chamber, as per an earlier decision.

Just a caution.

MR. JOYCE: But I'm just reading his name. It's a text message.

MR. SPEAKER: It's a caution. That person is no longer in this room, so not able to defend themselves.

MR. JOYCE: I'm just reading his text message. I'm not saying (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Regardless, they're not in the room to defend themselves.

MR. JOYCE: The Member for Placentia - St. Mary's is in the room. She's the one who made the allegation. I'm just talking about what she said to Mark Browne.

MR. SPEAKER: I ask you to exercise caution –

MR. JOYCE: Okay. This is a text message from the Member –

MR. SPEAKER: – as per a decision of two years ago.

MR. JOYCE: This is a text message from the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's who's in the room.

MR. SPEAKER: That person is no longer in the room.

MR. JOYCE: The Member for Placentia - St. Mary's is in the room. She's the one who sent the text message. That's who she sent it to. She sent the text message. The Member for Placentia - St. Mary's is in the room across from me right now.

Here's the other thing, and I've said this before. I said it on many occasions. Here's one, Mr. Speaker, and it will come out. This is what I always said. The Member for Placentia - St. Mary's said this in a text. I said this, publicly; here's proof that I have: If others come forth, it would solidify the facts.

Here's the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's sending a text message to another Member of the government asking them, can people come forward against me. That's what I had to put up with.

The swimming pool was approved by Cabinet. It was approved in the budget. It was approved by the policy committee back in early March; yet, I had to defend that I threatened the swimming pool, and asking for other people to come forward against me. This is in the text.

I will take care of this in my own way, Mr. Speaker –

MR. SPEAKER: Your time is over.

Thank you.

MR. JOYCE: – but I promised the people that I would do it in the Bay of Islands. That's just one of many.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time is expired.

Thank you.

MR. JOYCE: Yes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. George's - Humber.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to have an opportunity to get up and have a few words today to speak on the budget debate. I just want to take a few minutes, I probably won't use my whole time today, to make a few general comments about the budget and some issues related to the fiscal situation of the province as well.

Before I do that, I just want to say it's an honour to be here again, to have been re-elected for the third time to this House. It's great to be here to participate in this debate. I want to thank the people of the District of St. George's - Humber for giving me their support again in this last election.

It's interesting to be here and to listen to the speeches of many of the new Members and to hear them talk about their experiences going door to door and listening to the people, and also giving some understanding of the experiences they bring to this House. It's always been amazing to me when you look and listen to the people who've been elected to this House, the diverse backgrounds we come from and the fact that we all bring something a little different to this House and add to the debate and make the debate more meaningful that we have here.

It's great to see so many new Members here. I think the complexion of the House has really changed, and the way we're going to do business, I think, is going to change as well.

For example, last Wednesday we had a private Member's motion related to improving Question Period, improving the way we ask and answer questions in this House. So it was interesting to watch what happened there. We all got up and gave our comments on this motion. Some things we liked about it, some things we didn't like about it. There were amendments made to the motion; but, in the end, we all arrived at a version of this motion that was acceptable to everyone here in the House. Because we realized that we have to work together if we're going to make things work here.

I think that's one thing that's interesting about the situation that the people of the province have given us is that we have to work together. When we work together we all sort of take responsibility as well. We all take responsibility for the way things are done here, and the way things turn out as well.

So it was interesting; I was listening to the Minister of Finance the other day as he was talking about the bill related to removing the tax off automobile insurance. He said during the debate, I always look for suggestions from Members as to how we can save money. He

invited Members of this House to come forward, to talk to him in his office or to bring them forward here in the House.

A few days later, I was interested to listen to the Member for Bonavista. He took the minister up on the challenge and he provided three, I believe, possible ways that government could save money. So it was an interesting sort of interaction, and I think I would encourage other Members as well to make suggestions to the minister, to make suggestions to this House because I think when we do that, we add to the debate that's here and we bring forward ideas that the minister may want to implement as we move forward in the future.

Today we're debating the budget motion. Will we accept the budget measures that were presented before the election and reinstated by the Minister of Finance after the election? That's what we're doing here today.

The budget process is a number of things. It's not just one debate and it's not just people talking back and forth, there are a number of things that have to happen. I'm not sure if people who are listening at home understand the process. When the House closes in the evening, most evenings this past two weeks we've had Estimates Committees here where we go through each department line by line. The officials come in, sit here in this House and the Members of each Estimates Committee asks them questions. It's a very interesting process to hear the answers that they have and the suggestion and the questions that are being asked.

That's one part of the process of passing the budget. The Estimates in the Estimates book are the line by line, everything that's spent within that department is questioned and discussed here in this House and answers are given. Members get the information they need to make decisions or ask further questions in this House. So that's part of the process here as well.

Sometimes there's a non-confidence motion in the budget, sometimes there are amendments to the non-confidence motion to prolong the debate, but I think this year we seem to be moving along quicker than we sometimes do because we've just come off an election where

the people of the province have had an opportunity to speak directly as to how they want to go. It's interesting that we've had that level of co-operation in the House, that we've had this different sort of atmosphere here in the House and I think it's very positive that we have that happening here in the House.

The other things that we've had in this budget debate are motions in legislation related to the borrowing that's going to happen. Yesterday, I think it was, or the day before, we passed a motion to borrow \$1.2 billion – a significant amount of money to be borrowing. So, that's one thing we did.

Also, usually if there are any changes in tax legislation or any associated changes with the budget, sometimes that requires legislation as well. So we've had some debate on taxation, and when we remove the tax on automobile insurance. It was interesting to hear the debate that was happening about taxation.

Now, some people say taxation is a cruel act enacted upon people, that government enacts upon the population. It was interesting when the minister introduced the motion, he made a statement that: If you ask the people what tax they would like to pay, they would probably say none. That was an interest sort of statement, but we had some alternative views here in the House too.

I noticed the Member for St. John's Centre, when he rose in the budget debate, he talked about the importance of taxes and what is done with the taxes, so that was an interesting sort of exchange about taxation and the importance of taxation. So we're sort of talking about the fundamentals of government.

I was at an elementary school in Pasadena in my district a few years ago; it was a grade two class. One of the students, a young girl, put up her hand to ask and question. She said: Why do we need government anyway? That's one of the basic questions, I guess, that we have to justify on a daily basis maybe.

We often don't think about that: Why do we need government? But it's the basis of some of the political philosophy that we have, Thomas Hobbes and Ronald Dworkin and all of these

people who've spent a lifetime of thinking about: Why do we need government and what should the nature of government be? She got right to the heart of it: Why do we need government anyway?

I think that sort of related to the debate that we had on taxation: Why should government be able to take money from some people and give it to others or spend it on things? The answer that I gave that day was that it allows us to co-operate. Government is a way for people to come together to co-operate. And people are willing to give up a little bit of their freedom and a little bit of their money because they know they can co-operate, they can do things better and make life better for us all when we co-operate. That's why we need government.

The next question, I guess – she didn't ask it – but the next question I was thinking about is: To what extent should we take money from people and how much should we take? And I guess that's the central question of what we should do. I think most reasonable people would say okay, taxation is fine but when things fall down is when government doesn't spend the money, they collect from people, the money they ripped from people's pockets when they don't spend that prudently, when there's waste in the system and when they don't see results from the money that they get.

I think that's why it's important that we have a good discussion, a good debate and think about what we're doing in the House. That's why we need to co-operate and why we need to really think about how we're spending taxpayers' dollars that we raise. Because we have to make some decisions, hard decisions about what the priorities are, how we are going to spend the money and how we are going to invest it. Those are some things I think we need to keep in mind.

I think, as I look at the fiscal situation and the situation we were in in 2014, the fiscal crisis that we were in, there are three, sort of, questions we have to ask when we look at the fiscal state of the province, and the fact that we owe so much money and we're under a lot of stress to meet these demands that people have around the province. I think there are three sort of big, basic questions that we have to ask. The first question is: How did we get to where we are today in this

province? How did we get in the fiscal situation that we are in today?

So that's the first question because I think history is important. It's important to know how we got here. We shouldn't be tied to history totally but we have to learn from history, learn by the history of other places and our place. The other thing is: How can we get through this fiscal situation that we're in? What should we do to get through this situation? And I think the third big question is: How do we ensure that we don't get in this situation again? How do we ensure that we have a prosperous future in this province? So I think those are some big questions that we should be thinking about, that we should be discussing here in this House and that we should be debating as we move forward.

So the first question: How did we get where we are? I'm just going to touch on a few things in terms of our history and in terms of some of the fiscal issues that we've had to deal with and the public policy issues that we've had to deal with as a province.

One of the historical things, you have to go back to the early European settlement in Newfoundland, if you look at why people came here and why that impacted our settlement patterns. When Europeans came to this province, we came to prosecute the fishery. So that resulted in people being spread over a huge geographic area.

We're a province, Newfoundland and Labrador, that's about the same size as Great Britain. It's bigger than Texas, I think, bigger than California – these areas that have huge populations. But in terms of population, not only do we have a small population, but we have a population that because of our history, it's spread all around the province in various locations which make it difficult to provide services for areas of the province. So that's one of the facts of our geography, of our history, of our settlement patterns that we have to take into account when we look at part of the fiscal challenges that we face in this province.

If we look at our history in terms of more recent history, we look at the industrialization attempts by Smallwood, we look at the attempts to industrialize in the '50s, '60s and '70s, and some

of the problems that that led to and the way that added to the debt we had in this province as well. So that's an issue as well.

Another thing we need to look at is the oil revenue. How did we spend the oil revenue that we had in the early 2000s? We had about \$20 billion in oil revenue. Did we spend it wisely? Did we prepare ourselves for the future in the way we spent that oil revenue? That's what we have to ask ourselves. I think this is an important question because it relates to how – I think we're going to have an oil economy in this province for a considerable time into the future. I think the oil is going to be part of our economy and it's going to be a significant part of the revenue that we have in this province.

I think we have to ask ourselves how did we spend that revenue. If we look at what happened in this province in terms of our oil revenue, some economists look at the idea of the paradox of plenty. Sometimes places that get a big influx of resource revenue end up worse off than places that did not get the oil revenue, did not have the oil boost.

The revenue sort of changes the economy, changes the spending patterns of the government and leads to more problems in the long run than places that didn't have this influx of revenue. So I think we have to be smart enough as a province, smart enough as a people to learn from what has happened in other jurisdictions in terms of oil revenue and learn about how we're going to spend our oil revenues.

Places like Norway are often looked at as the model of a way to develop a sustainable future from offshore oil revenue. But Norway just didn't start off that way, they went through something similar to what we're going through now or we went through in 2014. Norway, the oil industry in the 1990s was just starting, then the price of oil dropped significantly. They were in a similar fiscal situation that were in in 2014. That, in large part now, we're still in. But what they did was it was such a shock to the system that the national will developed that we have to do something differently. We have to put money aside to develop this legacy fund, to have the revenue into the future. I think that's something that we have to look at in this province. We have to learn from other jurisdictions. Other places

have had oil as well and ended up worse off than they were. We have to make the most of it.

So those are just some thoughts that I have as we do this debate here today. Great to be here, great to have the chat, great to have the discussion, and I look forward to hearing what many of you have to say in the future and discussing the important issues of the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure I can stand in the heat and talk for 20 minutes. I always thought that being direct and to the point and less is more, so 20 minutes will be challenging for me.

It's an honour to stand here in the House to represent the people of Torngat Mountains. I want to thank the people for electing me. I feel very privileged and proud to serve on their behalf. I also want to congratulate all Members of this House for being elected by the people to serve. As I said, it's a great privilege, but it's also a great responsibility.

I look forward to working together to advance our province. This is very, very important times. Sometimes it's hard to tell if it's valued or not. The challenges can be great but I was raised to believe that if you serve the greater good, the rewards are just as great. I was proud to be given the responsibility for critic for Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs and also for Labrador Affairs. I thank the Member for Windsor Lake for his confidence in me and the support of my caucus. I do feel truly blessed. Like I said, the heat might get to me, Mr. Speaker.

I was listening to the hon. Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair yesterday and she spoke about her beautiful land and she was very, very proud of it. I think when you go to Labrador you understand why she was so proud. I know that when the Member for Labrador

West, when the recount is done and he's sworn in, I'm sure he will speak highly of his district as well.

There's something about Labrador. We call it the Big Land, but we could have called it the beautiful land; Nunatsiavut, our beautiful land. We are all quite proud.

My district of Torngat Mountains is filled with wonderful people, and the land is very rich and very beautiful. I offer say to anyone and everyone, if you do get the opportunity to travel up there, it is worth your while; very rewarding. You'll experience the beauty and riches and wildlife and culture that is very, very hard to find in this day and age.

We have char, salmon, black bears, polar bears, wildlife, too much to mention. Mr. Speaker, I know you're – you changed out on me. I was going to say – very, very familiar with the vast wildlife and the richness of the environment up there.

When we talk about budget, we talk about economy and we talk about balancing the economy and being fiscally responsible, which is one of the reasons why we've been elected here. We want to make sure that we have a future and that we leave a healthy future for our children.

When I look at where I live, people in Torngat Mountains, we believe in community and we believe in preservation of our environment and protection. That ties back into the economy as well, because if you ruin the land, then you ruin the environment and you pollute the food sources. As we see a lot in Third World countries, it does impact the economies. It's very, very difficult to be sustainable when you impact that.

For us, it's about quality of life. Earlier we talked about nursing homes. That was raised, talking about nursing homes, because the people who go into nursing homes are our elders, our seniors, and the thing is they've raised us. They looked after us. They scarified for us. So it's very, very important for us now that we ensure quality of life for them in their old age, that we turn around and we be responsible for them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. EVANS: My grandmother is in a nursing home in Goose Bay. We're very, very lucky, because my grandmother is 101.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. EVANS: When I said lucky, I should have said blessed, because my grandmother still has her memory. People come to her and ask her for stories. People come to her and ask her for words, Inuktitut words, because she's one of the last speakers of the Rigolet dialect, which is a dialect – in actual fact, I think she may be the last speaker.

With languages, there are different dialects. So the fact that she still has her – we would say, she still got her mind with her, we're very, very blessed, but there are other people out there who are not as fortunate. They still have to – they care, they respect and they value their grandparents, their mothers, even though they may not have their mental capabilities with dementia, Alzheimer's, those diseases. So we have to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we look after our people. We got to balance budgets and costs but we also got to look at quality of life. It's very, very important for us.

That also goes back to my district where I'm very, very blessed. My grandmother lives in the nursing home, but I'm going to say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm blessed, my family is blessed because I have two cousins and a sister who live in Goose Bay and every single night since grandmother went into the nursing home they go up to her room and they make sure she's looked after. That she's got ice in her drink, she's got her water. That her patches have been changed, nitroglycerine patches. I think that's one of the things that helps with her mind, is we have the ability to look after our grandmother. Even though she's hundreds of miles away, we still have family there.

I look at the other communities in my district, Mr. Speaker, the communities of Hopedale, Nain and Natuashish. I just googled – I wasn't being rude, but I googled on my phone the cost of a return ticket from Nain to Goose Bay. If somebody had their grandmother or their mother or their father or their grandfather in the home in

Goose Bay, how much would it cost for them to fly up and visit with them? Not to be there every night to make sure they're looked after, that their needs are met, that they weren't slipping through the cracks and also to help them with their memory because when seniors are left alone it does cause mental deterioration, memory lapses.

I googled it, and in actual fact if somebody in Nain wanted to travel to Goose Bay to visit one of their relatives in the home, it would cost, right now, \$998.98 – so \$1,000. The thing about it is poor people in Nain, Natuashish, Hopedale, Makkovik and all those communities, poor people – you know what I mean – who basically struggle to make a living, that actually may be on EI or may be on social assistance, they have people who go into nursing homes, Mr. Speaker, and when that person leaves the community they don't see them again. That is a tragedy.

So when we talk about nursing homes and access to nursing homes, we have to remember the people who can't afford to visit their families.

I feel blessed, I know my grandmother does. Recently, we thought we were going to lose her. She was ill and she was starting to suffer some sort of dementia and she was starting to hallucinate. I think she was only 100 then.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. EVANS: At 100, or she might have been 101 – she's probably going to scold me. We were very concerned, and we started to think – well, we started to think about dementia, but the fact that my people were there to look after her. Do you know what we figured out? That she was actually dehydrated from her illness and that was causing the dementia effects. As soon as they got her hydrated, she was back to her old self again.

Do you know something? Everybody that came in to visit her, she would tell them what she saw and what she said. Then she'd laugh – and you have to see my grandmother, she's only about four foot 10. She'd laugh and she'd say, how foolish is that?

We're very, very blessed, but when I say that we have to remember other people who are not as

fortunate. Because every single person that I know would give their last dollar to be able to visit their families in the nursing homes. So when we look at budget and economy and quality of life, we also have to remember that we have to look at quality of life as well. It's very, very important for us, Mr. Speaker.

Now, getting back to food for our seniors, for our children and all that kind of stuff, our caribou – because we share our caribou with Quebec; Northern Labrador, Central Labrador, Quebec. The George River caribou herd was a big food source for all our peoples. Anyone here who's been listening to the news over the last three years – and I know the hon. Member across the way there is very, very familiar with the collapse of the George River caribou herd. But the thing is without the caribou we lost our major source of food. We really, really, really did.

The thing about it is right now people are struggling to feed themselves and their families because of the caribou. It's very, very difficult. There are also a lot of people, not just our elders, Mr. Speaker, that have trouble not – they need that food source.

That would be like me coming over to the men here – and I'm going to be stereotypical now and say, okay, we're not going to let you have any more steak now. We're just going to give you tofu because it's a good protein. We're going to give you some vitamins. That's what you're going to eat. Now, do you think you're going to be happy campers? No, Mr. Speaker.

The thing about it is, with the loss of our caribou, a lot of our people are not happy campers. I saw it door to door, it has economically devastated, but it also, for terms of quality of life, it's devastating as well. It's very, very important for us as a food source, but, also, when you go to the North Coast and you talk to the Inuit people and you talk to the Innu people, when you talk about the caribou, you'll hear the spirituality; the spirituality is still there. The caribou was so valued and is so valued, it's spiritual to them. So, actually, by losing our food source, we've also lost a part of our culture as well. That's been a devastating effect on us as well.

Anyway, it goes back to, like I said, talking about economies and budgets and devastating impacts to communities, but the thing about it is, we have to look at the greater good and we have to look at all of our citizens as well. We have to look at our vulnerable populations such as our children.

It's been raised here in the House quite a lot about the 1.6 kilometre. I'm going to tell you something, honestly, coming from Torngat Mountains, it was a bit intimidating when we went around caucus because I can't related to 1.6 because we have no paved roads. In the winter, everybody walks to school, unless you have a Ski-Doo or your friend has a qamutik box that you can jump into. The thing about it is, it doesn't matter what the kilometres are; it doesn't matter.

Now, my sister just retired, she was a principal, and I have another sister in the same school now. I think it's minus 50, they'll close the schools; minus 50 (inaudible).

It's very, very important for us to make sure that, whether you're on the North Coast or you're down somewhere in St. John's, that our children are protected. Children are very, very important to us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. EVANS: Anyway, just looking at the different issues here too. The thing is, we've lost our caribou. We have trouble now with access to traditional foods. A lot of the families, like I said, on low income, they can't fully replace healthy food due to economic factors. It's very, very devastating to us, but it goes back to food security.

For people who don't know me, I say, Mr. Speaker, if you go back to my previous job and you say: Do you know Lela Evans? I don't know if I'm allowed to say my own name in the House, because if you ask anyone where I worked: Do you know the Member for Torngat Mountains? They're not going to know what you're talking about, but if you ask about me, Mr. Speaker, very, very importantly, they'll tell you that she's funny. She's very relaxed. She's helpful. I think, too, some of the things that I

talk about here can be quite controversial, but it's basically near and dear to my heart.

For example, I keep talking about the freight boat, but the thing about it is, we've lost the caribou. We can't have additional high cost for our food when we look at the additional trucking. So, I honestly asked if there's any way, when we talk about collaboration, if there's any way we could get our dedicated freight boat back between Lewisporte and the North Coast, just for food security alone.

There are other issues, and I do appreciate the honesty yesterday about the policing in the communities. That's very, very important because I was telling my caucus about a story about before we had policing – that tells you how old I am – when there was no police officer in the town because there was no station there, the men used to have to go. One of the men that used to be called upon was my father. My father would have to go. I was telling my sister about that, and she said: Yes, Lela, and did you tell them that mommy and Aunt Ruth used to have to go too, when there was an issue, domestic violence or mental health issues. They exist all throughout our province.

We can't look at a community and say, well they have a low crime rate. If that community is isolated with no roads, a police officer can't get in his vehicle and put on his sirens and drive 100 kilometres an hour and get to the next community in my district. That is why police presence is so important, not only as a crime deterrent but for the – what would you call that – the security that it gives to our elders, our seniors, our young families there, that we do have a police presence because if it wasn't important, we wouldn't have them anywhere. When you look at your urban areas, your rural areas, we need to have police presence, it's very important.

There are other issues, too, that are coming up. The inquiry into the Innu children in care, I heard that at the door; very, very important. I asked during Estimates was there any monies or any priority given in this budget. I was very disappointed that there isn't because, in actual fact, when I talk about our culture, our language, our tradition, the thing about it is how do you

acquire that? You acquire that as a child raised in a community.

So, when you take the Innu and Inuit children from the North Coast and you put them, could be anywhere, but most of our children have gone to the Northern Peninsula. Yes, they are good homes and they're looked after, I'm not contesting that. That's not an issue for me, Mr. Speaker. What I'm saying is they're not having access to the culture.

That to me is a flashback to residential schooling where my grandmother and my mother and my father, at the age of five and six, and you know how old my grandmother is so this has been going on a long time, basically, left the community. There was no community, Mr. Speaker, just a few houses, that's why we had residential schools, I think, but they went in boat in the fall at the age of five and six years old, never to see their mother and father again until spring break up.

If you have a child that's five and six years old now, you think about getting your child ready, putting them on a boat and then you're not going to see them until the spring. The thing about it is, that's devastating to young children, but the thing is my grandmother, Mr. Speaker, my mother is not – she obtained a lot of the language and she sings in the Inuktitut choir in my hometown. We're very, very proud of that, but there was no hope for us, the third generation.

I also want to say we did not know the ghosts we saw in our families, in our communities, until recently when the residential schools became public. It was only then, because I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, very rarely was it talked about in the houses, in the homes.

I have less than a minute, but I'm going to tell you about my impact. When I was convocating from university, Bachelor of Science, honours degree, my grandmother came out. She was very, very proud. We went out for supper, we went out for breakfast and we went out for dinner. We went to Beachy Cove Café, this is back in the day, Mr. Speaker. I didn't really notice, my mother kept saying to my grandmother, you don't have to eat that turnip, Mom. Finally, towards the end, she looked at me

and she looked over and she said: Lela, do you think they're going to mind I never ate my turnip?

In residential school at the age of six, she found out she didn't like turnip. She never seen a turnip before, and every day they would take the plate from her, what was left, and put it up no the stove to keep it warm and the next meal; breakfast, dinner or supper, that plate was put down until she ate it all. Then it would start again sometime that week, it would be turnip again.

That was residential school, and for 13 seconds I'm going to tell you, my mother told me there was a big barrel of water and one cup for 50 to 60 kids. She said we used to be so thirsty because we weren't allowed to drink, only that one cup. She said we would almost collapse. We would go over and scrape the frost off the window.

So, when you look at me, when I stand here and I seem very, very angry it's because of the ghosts. Don't even get me started on the missing and murdered because I personally know a lot of the women that were murdered, my friends, and my relatives and very, very important the thing about it is it does impact us.

Do you know something? As children we don't know what it is, we just see it. It's very, very important. But, at the end I'm going to say, as a university graduate, as a person that actually worked in industry, I do understand economics, I do understand the importance of it, and I do understand the value of us being financially responsible.

I applaud both sides of the House that we have to work together. But, at the end, we can't forget our seniors, we can't forget our children and we can't forget the people who are on EI or social assistance. We are so far removed from them a lot of times that we don't understand.

One of the things I just want to say is I come here to try and help people who don't know to understand, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

One of the incredible opportunities that each and every one of us share and we should celebrate is the opportunity to hear from each other, to hear each other's lived experiences, to grow closer to each other by examining how we can become closer and learn by those lived experiences.

Each and every one of the 40 Members that represent various constituencies in this House of Assembly has something to offer to each and every one of us and to the province. So I, too, would like to celebrate and salute the Member for Torngat Mountains for the incredibly eloquent first address to this House and say thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: My lived experiences are very different than hers, but I am also very proud of some of the things that I've been able to accomplish in my own public life. I've enjoyed relationships with Members from not only this House, but Members from the House of Commons where I offered my services for close to a 20-year period, working with colleagues, parliamentarians from across the entire country, but most importantly to me, working with colleagues and parliamentarians from Newfoundland and Labrador to see our own province and our own country grow and prosper.

Mr. Speaker, I am incredibly humbled to represent the people of Corner Brook, the District of Corner Brook. This past election was my ninth consecutive election in 23 or 24 years. That experience and what I take from it is humbling, that people could give their confidence and their trust and to ask me to serve them in matters that are so important to them as well.

The District of Corner Brook is truly a historic and beautiful place. It is the envy of many in our province as an incredible place to raise children, to grow and the quality of life that it offers is second to none.

Being elected nine consecutive times by the people of Corner Brook – a much larger area of course as a federal MP – it gives me incredible satisfaction to be elected by my own hometown in this latest election. I want to say to my supporters, some of whom, many of whom have been with me since 1996 in my very first election, who carry on that tradition and that support and that energy into my campaigns to this day, I want to say a special thank you to each and every one of you.

This election we were joined by new friends and new supporters and each and every one of those people were mentored by people who have been with me from days ago. We have jelled an incredible team. That is what I attribute my election success to. It's not my work, it is our work. That's the way I view this House of Assembly. It is not our work, it is all of our work that will make a difference. Working in collaboration and partnership with each other, we will indeed make a difference.

Mr. Speaker, when I first went to Ottawa in 1996, one of the first people to reach out to me was not who you might think it was. It was, then, former Senator Jack Marshall. Jack Marshall was a former Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament for Humber – St. George's – St. Barbe. Jack Marshall was working in a senator's office, having met the mandatory age for retirement from the Senate at 75 back several years before, was still going to work each and every day, working on behalf of veterans.

He reached out to me requesting a copy of my *Hansard*. Back in those days, in 1996, *Hansards* were printed on a daily basis, every Member received five copies and he wanted to keep in touch and aware of the events and occasions of the House of Commons, so he reached out to me to ask me for a copy of one of my five copies of *Hansard*. Well, I was certainly happy to oblige on one condition, that we could sit and meet and chat. And we did just that.

He gave me one of the best pieces of advice that anyone could ever give me, which is, being a Progressive Conservative, he said to me: Gerry, make sure you always keep in your heart one thing. You don't get elected by just asking members of your own party to vote for you, you

get elected by getting everyone to vote for you. It's something that I didn't necessarily adapt to or except right away, but over the course of time I understood that his counsel was very sage, very wise. I have always reached out in the spirit of co-operation, never taking partisanship to the full fury that sometimes is known to occur, making sure that everyone in my district was well represented. And, Mr. Speaker, that is probably why I've been able to succeed on nine consecutive elections since 1996.

I have always known my roots, and I am so proud of the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as the Liberal Party of Canada. The values that are empowered by my political party are ones that are deeply internal to me. It's one of the reasons why I have been able to recognize and connect with people from so many walks of life. My party represents the values of understanding the importance of a market economy, while as well understanding the importance of a social safety net and a social safety system that allows everyone to reach for their best potential, regardless of their circumstance in which they begin the journey. And that's why I'm proud to call myself a Liberal, and proud of the governments and the parties that I've been part of.

We have accomplished much in the District of Corner Brook under that principle. If I look back at the recent history and the recent needs of my community, I reflect very comfortably and easily on the fact that while there were struggles, there were successes. First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, there were those amongst us who were disadvantaged who needed a helping hand. One of the first things, one of the first initiatives that I took command over was support for Transition House, now called Willow House, which is a transition house for women and their children who face domestic violence or housing uncertainty.

That's why, with a facility in Corner Brook, which was just simply not up to par for any reasonable person to call home, we put our shoulder to a project to ensure that Transition House, now Willow House, was redeveloped as a facility that was welcoming and comfortable under difficult circumstances for those who then called it a temporary home.

We were able to invest, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, my colleagues from this side of the floor, we were able to put \$1.7 million contribution to a revised, to a refurbished, to a brand new Willow House protecting, supporting those who are most vulnerable.

Another project, Mr. Speaker, which improved the quality of life for each and every one of us in Corner Brook but, as well, for the entire region, was the development of a long-term care facility. Corner Brook is now about to turn the key to open the doors very shortly to a 145-bed, state-of-the-art, long-term care facility; 120 long-term care beds with rehabilitative services; and, as well, palliative care facilities for those who are reaching their end of life. What an important, important accomplishment, which is a basic service.

I want to say a very hearty and sincere thank you to the Minister of Health and Community Services, to the Minister of Transportation and Works, who were working in partnership with the Premier and colleagues from the West Coast and colleagues from across the province within our caucus made this happen in Corner Brook, just as they are making similar projects happen in Grand Falls and Gander, and improving the quality of health in St. John's in our mental health facility there. That's the efforts of a team.

Mr. Speaker, we also saw as a rich kernel, a rich opportunity that has a legacy and a history in Corner Brook, our post-secondary facilities, our university and college campuses in Corner Brook, we saw that as an opportunity not as a cost. It's why, Mr. Speaker, we were able to, with concerted effort and deliberate effort, make sure that we developed the College of the North Atlantic campus in Corner Brook.

By establishing the Centre of Excellence in Energy and Thermal Systems in Corner Brook with a \$5.8 million investment, we were to establish Corner Brook as the headquarters for the Centre for Workforce Innovation, providing a think-tank facility for new developments in labour market, realities in labour market circumstances that were made in Newfoundland and Labrador solutions, to our Newfoundland and Labrador workplace and our workforce. We were able to develop entrepreneurship facilities

in both Grenfell Campus and the College of the North Atlantic through investments in our innovation incubator and our entrepreneurial incubator, Gateway West. We were also able to develop facilities for new innovations for entrepreneurs through our Makerspace facilities.

We are developing programs in agriculture which, for the very first time, when you think of the necessity of using post-secondary education and training as a springboard for new developments in new industries; from 1949 until 2019, Newfoundland and Labrador did not have any specialized training in agricultural technology. That's about to change with the enrolment of our first class in the co-operative agriculture technology program at the College of the North Atlantic. Complementing that are new initiatives at Grenfell Campus of Memorial University where we're already engaged in a masters program studies in agriculture and agricultural research, but they are developing a Ph.D. program, a post-doctoral program in agriculture, and that is an exciting development.

We're growing our research capacity at Pynn's Brook, just as we're growing our research capacity in agriculture in Wooddale. The development in the consolidation of a headquarters facility for the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources in Corner Brook was well met and appropriate.

Corner Brook, of course, is home to the province's now single pulp and paper mill. It's a newsprint mill. There were three, of course, in this province. Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, despite difficult times in the marketplace and changes in technology, this mill has endured, and largely because of the incredible workforce, the incredible team of people that make that place hum. They put the true hum on the Humber, as the expression goes. It is a mill that was developed in 1925. It was first created in 1925. From 1925 until the mid-1970s, our newsprint mill was the largest mill in the world.

So it's an incredible achievement. While it still has some pretty dated technology in it, it is still in operation today. That's why, Mr. Speaker, with some of the things that we do and do in this Chamber and do as a government may not necessarily be subject of a press release or an

announcement but they are very, very much important.

It was not long ago that newsprint throughout all of Canada was under difficult circumstances, not only because of markets but because of a US Commerce Department challenge against anti-dumping and subsidization, over-subsidization of the paper mills.

While all newsprint mills in Canada face that particular challenge from the US Commerce Department, triggered by a particular competitor newsprint mill on the west coast of the US, that US Commerce Department investigation led to a revelation of certain facts through the statement of claim that was made by the US competitor against the Canadian mills, that the Corner Brook mill was under a particular threat, a unique threat of attack in that the filing, or the allegation that was filed against us in the action was that the loan that was given to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador was an unfair subsidy – so said the allegation in the statement of claim – under international trade rules because it was not provided under business terms. It was not a normal commercial transaction.

Why did they make that particular claim? Well, under the rules of international trade, a loan can only be made if it is under normal business terms, under a normal rate of repayment and a normal interest rate, a commercially normal rate. What the US company used as the basis of their allegation that this was an unfair subsidy were the words of our former government.

When they came forward in 2011, the former premier of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2011, joined by the former Minister of Natural Resources, came forward and said that Corner Brook Pulp and Paper was on the verge of bankruptcy. The mill was at risk of closing and closing permanently because it was not competitive and could not meet its obligations.

So to put this in perspective, to tie this all together, when the loan was formally offered in 2014, the loan was characterized by its US competitors as being not of a genuine commercial nature and form because loaning money to an otherwise bankrupt company would

be an unfair subsidy. In the statement of claim put forward by the US competitor, brought forward by the US Commerce Department, was press releases and media statements, copies of the website articles from CBC and *The Telegram* in which our former government, their words were weaponized against the workers and the paper mill in Corner Brook. Their own words, the words of our own government, were weaponized against the future of our mill.

I always said, Mr. Speaker, and I took time and energy to ensure that everyone knew that Corner Brook Pulp and Paper was a viable, economic entity that was producing good jobs for the people of our province and, in particular, for the forestry workers in Western and Central Newfoundland and was making a difference with employment inside the mill gate. I took time and energy to make sure that economic case was made – actually, even going so far as hiring an internationally acclaimed paper industry consultant to make that case in front of 600 mill workers in Corner Brook to refute the allegations that were being made back in 2011 by the former government.

My research back in 2011 was part of the package of materials that was ultimately used in 2017 and '18 to refute the claims of the US Commerce Department and refute the claims of the US competitor, making sure that the case was made clear that our paper mill was worthy of that investment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our government went beyond that because one of the things that loan did not do, at that point in time, was protect the interests of the pensioners and the future pensioners with a pension plan. Our government made amendments, unique to any arrangement ever conducted in all of Canada, to ensure that the pension plan of the workers of Corner Brook Pulp and Paper and the existing retirees was protected in perpetuity, tied directly to the value to the sale of the asset of the Deer Lake Power facilities, if and when that should ever occur.

Mr. Speaker, we hope it never occurs because we always hope that the mill is producing paper and power is being produced by the Deer Lake Power to power that mill; but if there is a circumstance, for whatever reason, it may not necessarily occur, well, pensioners can feel

comfortable and confident that their retirement funds are secure. That, in its own right, created confidence for the economy of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I can't believe I've already expended a certain amount of time. There's much more to say but, in the coming days, another initiative will be advanced and I want to say, after a lot of hard work by Members of this caucus and this Cabinet, we're going to be talking soon about a project which was announced in 2007 but never fulfilled, despite promise after promise after promise. It will be this government that delivers a new hospital for Corner Brook and it will be this government that fulfills a broken promise made by the former government.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the people of Corner Brook.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's indeed an honour to stand in this House as we speak to the main motion on the budget. I've had the opportunity to do that now for – this will be my ninth time to stand and speak to a budget. Every time it brings some emotion, it brings some concept of some positive things that are happening, it gives some challenges to what we're doing here, but this one brings much more joy to it in the sense because, at the end of the day, we've seen things change here.

For nine years, I've had the opportunity to sit in this House. At times, we've sat in majority governments where there was such a majority that even the backbenchers were considered the minority of the government in the House of Assembly, so much so that we were sitting on this side of the House for a period of time. So having the ability to be engaged at that point is lessened, but we have a great opportunity to do the right thing here.

Before I talk about where we are when it comes to the budget and the impact it's going to have on the people, I first want to thank the people of my district who, for the fourth time, have put

their faith in me and they elected me back to the House of Assembly, and with an overwhelming note of support. I didn't look it up, but somebody told me I had the highest percentage of votes cast in my district. I thank the people who did that. We had a super team who came together.

I have a very unique district, when you have an extremely urban centre like Paradise, you have a growing metropolis with Portugal Cove-St. Philip's that has all kinds of unique metropolis-urban areas, yet rural areas with farms and everything else, and you have Bell Island, its own unique little paradise in the world itself. So, the challenges on a day-to-day basis, for me or any Member of my district, is never about boredom. It's always a different challenge as part of that.

First and foremost, I want to congratulate everybody in this House who got elected; congratulate them and thank them for putting their names forward. It's not an easy decision to want to change your life and to put yourself in the forefront and on the spotlight, at any given time, and take the ridicule and the criticism and the challenges that come with that.

Some of these challenges, contrary to popular belief, are financial challenges because some you're changing your career paths and you're taking a chance that it may last four years, eight years or beyond. You're taking chances that, at the end of the day, business entities that you may want to get into, those opportunities may not be there again. So people have put things out there for that reason, because they all want to serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We all do that in any given day.

I've heard it from a number of my colleagues on both sides of the House, there's nobody who comes in this House of Assembly who doesn't want to do the right thing, doesn't want to improve people's lives in Newfoundland and Labrador. We know, and I've been on both sides of it, there are decisions that have to be made sometimes that you shake your head, you get a knot in your stomach when you're making them, that you know you're going to regret but at the end of the day you know you must do.

There are other ones that you do and, at the end of it, you shake your head and say: Why did I make that decision? Why did I support that? There had to be a better way. We could have come up with a better solution. But that unfortunately are is the trials and tribulations of the House of Assembly and trying to either govern or be part of the Opposition.

I also want to note this is the first time – anybody who knows me and there are a number of people who will do it, any of my colleagues who've ever sat with me in the House of Assembly. The House of Assembly is the one place that I never felt comfortable and not that I didn't respect what goes on in the House of Assembly and the necessity and the benefits for it, it was just my own physical ability to be here and my attention span for that always challenged me to want to get to having to find a better way to do that. Maybe it was because of my surroundings, maybe it was own personal thought about coming in here, but I will tell you what I've seen in this House in the last two weeks have made me feel a lot better about coming here.

I actually get up early enough now – I'm normally the first one in Confederation Building when it comes to one of the employees, but I come here now with a different step, and that's a tribute to what has happened with this electorate. The fact that I thought people had given up but when we saw that the popular vote had increased for all parties in the sense the majority of the people came out to vote in this election, so people still care. People still want a stake in what goes on. People still want to be heard and people want to make sure that we still do the right thing.

Having two independents elected, to me, sent another message. That it's not just about following party lines, that it's not just about traditionally how things were done, it's about serving the people in the right manner and people spoke. I saw that as an enlightening process that I could do this for another number of years, so I came here. I will tell that one of the more positive reasons why I enjoy coming to the House now, and I would have never said that in the last nine years, never, and my family know Sunday nights I would cringe about what was coming Monday having to come to the

House of Assembly, but I say what now because, in caucus, it's a different world.

The talented people that we have, the engagement that we have, the sincerity that they have, the collaborative approach and the openness and honesty that has made it a whole different world for me being in there. Do I miss some of my colleagues from former sittings here? Of course, I do. Do I miss all of them? Of course, I don't.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. BRAZIL: I'll be brutally honest on that, but I will tell you sitting in the caucus room now is an enlightening experience and that's a testament to the people who got elected, who come from various backgrounds. I look over here and the 15 of us who sit in that room on any given day, the different backgrounds, and we're as unique as night and day because of our backgrounds; our geographic backgrounds, even the age categories, to the careers that people have had, to the economics.

That makes us a much better caucus. It makes us much more cognizant of what people, the average person out there is going through. It makes us much more open to ensure that we have proper dialogue so that when we make decisions, they're well thought out and they service the majority more than the minority.

You're not always going to be able to get what you'd like to do, or your view is not always going to be the most popular one, or it's not always going to be the one that the caucus decides to go on, but what I've found in less than two weeks, the discussion in the room, the friendly bantering sometimes even about districts and wants and needs, but, particularly, the respect about coming to a decision that everybody can live with, that comes with consensus. I see that as an example of what we can do in this House.

If somebody had asked me that a term ago or two terms ago, would that be possible in the House of Assembly. I would've said impossible. The political views we have, our selfishness – and I say that out of respect – for wanting to take care of our district only and ensure that we get another X the next time we stand here, would've

been too hard to overcome, but what I've seen in our caucus and what I'm seeing in this House over the last number of days and discussions and dialogue and debate, I see that there's hope that we can get to a point where, whatever decisions are made here would be in the best interest of people in Newfoundland and Labrador. We all go home, we'll all be able to live with it and we'll sleep better that night.

I've seen that in the fact that we're going to come up with a new approach by taking a piece of legislation, send it to a committee that's made up of all parties, bringing in whatever experts or whatever approaches we need to ensure, when the legislation comes back, it best fits being able to address whatever that particular paper and piece of legislation was intended to do.

I've come a long way in my own thought process about where politics is. I had an out time. People say about people in politics coming in and going out. You come in at certain times and sometimes it's luck that dictates that, sometimes it's circumstance. I came in under a circumstance. I always had an intention of getting into politics. When that was going to happen – I had opportunities years ago but didn't take them and regretted some of that, but I did have, unfortunately, an opportunity – I say unfortunately because of the Member who was there who I wholeheartedly supported, because of an illness, passed away. That gave me an opportunity to come in.

My exit, I already had set when I was leaving. That was set because I didn't enjoy this. I enjoyed the political part of serving people but I didn't enjoy the House of Assembly. I didn't enjoy just the totally bantering back and forth and were we really getting anywhere. Was anybody really listening? Was legislation going to change that would really reflect what we've heard? I didn't feel it was happening, but I do feel we're that much closer.

Are we there? Of course we're not but we're closer. We're close enough that I feel I could stay at this. I continue to do my little part to, hopefully, improve people's lives. That's the first positive thing that I can say about coming to the House of Assembly, other than working with my colleagues. I can say, and I do want to

reiterate, caucuses, where we are and what that means for us in moving forward.

We've already put it out publicly, and we put it out in this House, we're an open caucus, to be very collaborative. We don't normally want to always use that, but we're very open to ensuring we do the right things, and that means all of us on both sides of the House.

With that part of it, I'm looking forward to wherever it takes us. If it's the next two years, three years, four years, whatever this process takes us to, I know we're going to make a lot of positive moves in the House of Assembly and we're going to do a lot of good for the people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That may mean having to make some hard decisions also, as we move forward, but I would hope those hard decisions are so thought out that people would still have hope, that they'll see light at the end of the tunnel, that the business community don't give up on what we do here and that they see we're a united front here. That we will fight for our districts. We will fight for our province and we'll fight for our country.

We can do all of that and still be civil with each other and still ensure the next generation has a better lifestyle than we do and the future generations there, and be sustainable in this province, be it around the economics, be it around the environment, be it around the future development of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So, halfway through my speech, I've come to a point of being able to tell everybody, I'm happy to be here. After all of that. I could have started that way –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: – but I'm happy to be here for a reason, and I just outlined those particular reasons.

I want to talk a little bit about my district and how it's grown over the last nine years and the things that have come and gone in those periods, and the struggles that we still have, like all of us, we still have.

I was minister at one point and somebody said if you had \$5 billion more in Transportation and Works what would you do? I said I'd do 10 per cent of the work that needs to be done. That's a reality. I know the minister over there is looking and nodding, knowing you'll still be short on what we need on the infrastructure net, but that \$5 billion would do a lot to improve how we do things in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We need to find a way to get to that point, where we can still improve all the things we need to do and still make it at a point where people can invest here and people want to come here.

I want to talk about my district. As you know, people forget Bell Island is 11 per cent of my district. It's 98 per cent of the challenges and the inquiries I get on a given day because of the uniqueness of a boom-and-bust community. It's an economically depressed area. It provides a transportation link as a ferry service, but, at the end of the day, the potential in that is 55 per cent of what it can be for this whole region from around a tourism point of view and an industrial development point of view and as part of an attraction.

One of the challenges we had at the beginning was providing a more equitable and a more reliable ferry service. Now, nine years later, and I know the Minister of Transportation and Works, who for the last four years, have been working with me on that. We're still trying to get there, but we have invested tens of millions of dollars to improve the ferry service itself. We're getting there. We're probably a year away with a couple of tweaks, a couple of changes, some additional training and maybe an investment in a shore-based manager, Mr. Minister, we could correct a lot of things and make Bell Island one of the sought out places for people to live, for people to visit and for different types of industrial development. That's a very important part of where we're going.

On the community, with only 11 per cent of the district, when I saw that 92 per cent of the population came out and voted, that was extremely positive for me. It showed people were interested in what was happening in politics. It wasn't just about because I was there and came from that community. It was about people were engaged and they had challenges

that they wanted someone to address, and that was a testament to them.

Did I get all the votes? Of course, I didn't. Did I get a substantial amount? Sure, I did. That's not in anyway a slight against my opponent, but I come from Bell Island, I grew up there. I've been very active there. People gave me an understanding that if there was anybody who could best address some of their issues, it would be me, so I appreciate that from them.

Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, which is 65 per cent of my district, and is a growing community with a number of challenges but challenges in a good sense of infrastructure needs and this type of thing, have come a long way. When we started, I remember giving an interview when I ran for the nomination against five other people, which included the mayor of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, a doctor, two councillors, business people and the question was: What is it that you see are the key things that are needed in the district?

Bell Island's economic development and the ferry service improvements. Portugal Cove-St. Philip's needed infrastructure in its education. The kids in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, the one elementary school was built for 420; had 710 in it. Had cubicles everywhere inside, the gymnasium was divided into four classrooms, the kitchen was no longer used, the library was made into three classrooms. We had module classrooms wherever we could put them and we had no ability to expand, so there was a need to be able to move that.

The junior and high school students were bused into St. John's. There was no attachment to their community, yet only 20 years before, if you grew up in Portugal Cove-Philip's, you got your full education from kindergarten to grade 11, you got your full education, and now with the grade 12, that was lost.

One of the objectives I had said was education improvements in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's so that, at the end of the day, we have full access from kindergarten on to high school graduation within that community.

In Paradise, we had an extremely growing community, growing faster than any other

community in Atlantic Canada. It had one school. At this point now since we (inaudible), we've got four, with a junior high being built and I know in acknowledgement that a high school will be built, too. There's a community itself that needs to be an all-inclusive community and we're very close.

It had very minimal recreation facilities, but working with council and myself and the former premier who was one of the Members at the time, and another former Member who also represented part of Mount Pearl was there, we collectively, working with councils and the communities there, managed to invest almost \$75 million in infrastructure when it came to recreation.

If you've been there and saw the recreation centres, the double ice surface, the ball fields, the soccer fields, this place is second to none. The walking trails, all the things that are there now, you can see that it's a growing community and the reason why it's called Paradise and why it has the highest percentage of young families in Newfoundland and Labrador. You can also look at the business community, how it's thriving in that area. That's a testament of investing in the infrastructure to ensure that things move the way they should.

We've had a great working relationship from a regional point of view. We've even had staff in Paradise work with staff in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, who in turn were working with Bell Island to ensure that if we're going to do things, if we're going to put out a tender, and we managed to be able to do that, that our engineering was done in a manner that we would save so everybody benefited when you start bundling things together. There was a collaborative approach to getting things done.

Somebody asked me one time: What was the best thing you achieved? As a matter of fact, it was the former premier, I had him in my district one time and we drove around and he saw a \$3.5-million new fire hall in one part of the community, another fire hall in another part of the community. He saw four new schools that had been built, infrastructure, tens of millions of dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars, I might add, at the end of it, when you add it up. A \$50-million ferry and another \$12 million put in the

infrastructure. He'd ask me what was the most important thing I was proud of I had done.

I said come with me. We drove – his wife and my wife were in the car together, we were going to a function. I stopped in front of this home that was about 85 years old, and I said: It's that. He looked at it, and it was still a fairly dilapidated home. He said: That's your biggest achievement? I said: Yes, it is. He said: How is that? I said: Eight months ago that house had no windows in it, it had all plywood up to it. The elderly gentleman who lived there alone, it was an old company home that had been passed on and the person was on income support. I said: That man would never ask for anything from anybody. Not that he was too proud, he didn't understand the process, didn't realize and figured this was his stake in life and this was the best he could accept.

We managed to put windows in that. If you looked at the house, there were three or four different shades of paint on it. That had been something he had done. After the windows were done, I guess people have extra paint left, he took pride in that and painted that.

His garden was meticulously done for an older home, but that, to me, was a testament of the things that were more important. That individual's quality of life had improved, being comfortable in his home, taking pride in his home. It was much more than how elaborate the arena was going to be, or the fire hall, or the schools we had, which are very important, but it's the little things that we need to remember that we do as elected officials. They are the things that have the biggest impacts. Sometimes you forget that because it's all about the ribbon you cut and we all go through that.

If I can give any advice, particularly to any of the new elected ones, think about that, think about that extra drug that somebody's Aunt Jane gets because it helps them cope with cancer treatment they're doing, or it helps them cope with something that they have from another medical alignment. Think about something else that you did for a school, a little small project that may help certain kids have more access to it, be it for behavioural or learning reasons.

The little things are just as important as the big things that they have a name on it or that you can take as part of your legacy. The biggest legacy is going to be the people who will remember you for the things you did that you didn't get any credit for. There're the most important things.

I've learned that over the years, and while you'll still go argue, fight and all that, the normal process for that, everybody is entitled to their Capital Works and all those type of things, and you do go to bat with particular ministers and that and try to sell why yours is more important or more necessary right now, but it's the smaller things. It's when you champion a cause for an individual. It may mean that they need you to champion them because there's another entity, and it may not even be a government entity that they're not getting a fair shake from or there's a service there that they're being excluded from.

They are the little things that make you feel more important as an elected official. They're the things that, when you sit down in the nighttime, or you run into that person, you're not looking for any praise, but the little smile you get from them, that's what makes you get through the hard times that are going to be in the House of Assembly.

At times you have to make some hard decisions. At times you're going to think did I make the right decision. They're the important things that have to be done.

I've learned a lot of things over my lifetime. I've learned that my family are willing to give up anything for me to be able to do what I wanted to do, and I thank them for that. I very much thank them for that, but I do say, the people that I serve is the reason I come here every day. What's happening in this House in the last period of time has made it much easier and I must thank my caucus for making it easier to come every morning and want to be a part of this.

I thank the Members of this House for listening today. I look forward to working for you guys over the next number of years.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

At this time, I would adjourn debate on the budget motion.

At this time, I would call from the Order Paper, Orders of the Day, Concurrence Motion, Motion 3 for the Government Services Committee.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a pleasure to stand and talk about Committee. We've been through most of the Committees in all areas of the budget now, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of Committees remaining to go through. This particular one we've concluded, and I appreciate all Members who've taken part in those Committee meetings, Mr. Speaker. The opportunity for all Members to look at departments line by line, to ask questions about spending line by line and to get a better understanding of where government's investment goes.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of things that I'd like to talk about is *Budget 2019* because I've got a great deal of optimism for the future of the province. I'd like to share some of the reasons with all Members of the House for that optimism, Mr. Speaker, because I think where we've come from in 2015-2016 where things looked pretty bleak and most people, Mr. Speaker, if they were honest, would probably say they thought about their future, whether or not they were going to stay in the province, whether or not there was a future here for their children.

Mr. Speaker, we've come a long way from where we were in 2015-16. I think that sense of optimism for anybody in certain industries who can see the telltale signs of what's happening, I think it's important for the people of the province to have a greater understanding of that as well. I've often used the analogy, Mr. Speaker, it's like planting a tree. It takes time for

the tree to take root, once it takes root, it still takes a bit of time for the tree to bear fruit.

Mr. Speaker, we're starting to see some of the fruits of the labour of what we've been doing, as a government, and why I think all 40 Members in this Legislature have a positive story to tell when we go back to our districts.

There's still a great deal of work to do, there's no question about that, but, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing major economic indicators showing retail sales are expected to grow. We've got more jobs in the province than what *Budget 2015* projected we would have, at this particular time. Those jobs, Mr. Speaker, there's another story even behind those jobs because in *Budget 2015*, we had absolutely no idea the province was going to face the impact of Fort McMurray and the effect that it had on jobs and the huge incomes that thousands of people made and brought back here. So despite the fact that there were thousands of people affected by that, we're still ahead of what the projections were.

Another story behind those numbers in 2015, Mr. Speaker, they included two projects: Alderon and Bay du Nord. We only signed the Bay du Nord agreement last summer and now we can officially forecast what we anticipate the jobs to be for that, but that's some years away. Alderon is not even signed yet; that deal is not even signed. Whether we get there or not remains to be seen, but I have great confidence in our Minister of Natural Resources that she'll get us to that place, if at all possible.

Those two projects, even though those deals weren't signed, those jobs were projected for 2018 and 2019. Not only was it Fort McMurray that we've overcome the negative impact of that, but we've also surpassed the numbers that included Bay du Nord and Alderon. We've come a considerable distance today from what the projections were and we've surpassed the projections even with those.

We've had 11 consecutive months now of year-over-year job growth in this province. Capital investment is higher than what we had anticipated it would be in 2015. Capital investment is continuing to show signs of continued growth. We know that jobs follow capital investment. We also know that we have

\$18 billion attracted to this province in industries like the oil and gas industry and the mining industry. Mr. Speaker, we have \$4.3 billion right now in exploration work on the books in this province.

We all know the challenges of Bill C-69, it's talked about on a regular basis on this House, and I think what we need to do with Bill C-69 is work together. Again, there are 40 ambassadors in this House and if we truly want to do what's best for the province, we need to work together to try to improve the federal legislation to allow industry in this province, the oil industry, to continue to grow and expand.

Mr. Speaker, we've got \$9 million available for investment in innovation and business development to enhance service and supply in *Budget 2019*. Now, I'm leading to a particular place with some of the things that I'm saying and I'll get to that. We've got \$75 million agreed to with Equinor to develop a deepwater centre of excellence because if you can drill in our waters, you drill anyway in the world. If you can drill in our ocean conditions, especially in the deeper waters, you can drill anywhere in the world.

We've got \$3 million put aside in this year's budget to create a Digital Ocean Innovation Centre. We've got \$2.5 million for a Subsea Centre of Excellence for training, research and product testing. Now, Mr. Speaker, why are we putting this investment there? Because we know what's about to happen in this province. We are on the doorstep of seeing the many trees that we've planted and waited to take root, and now that they're starting to take root we're starting to see that there're about to bear fruit.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that we've got 75 exploration wells registered with our province today and, once we start drilling, we know that that's going to provide a very, very positive future for the people of this province. We've got four wells currently operating in our offshore today. Those four wells are giving us just over \$1 billion in royalties today, Mr. Speaker. We also know that based on global statistics – because we've done the geoscience, we've done the seismic work, which is why we've been able to attract \$4.3 billion in exploration work in our province. We've done the homework, we've

gone to the global oil industry and we've said the seismic work is done, the geoscience work is done, this is what we believe we have and what we have to offer you.

Based on that, we've got eight new players in our offshore. I believe it's eight. I'm looking at the Minister of Natural Resources. Eight new players in our offshore industry?

MS. COADY: Eight.

MR. OSBORNE: We've got eight new players. Over and above the companies that are currently operating on our four producing projects, we've got eight new players, Mr. Speaker, attracted to this province; 75 exploration wells. Based on global statistics, we know that one in every six or seven of those exploration wells should lead to a profitable project.

Well, do the math. Once we start doing those exploration wells, you'll understand why we invested \$2.5 million – and I'm looking at the Member representing Holyrood, for the Marine Institute innovation centre in Holyrood, because that will add to our deepwater centre of excellence.

We've negotiated with the federal government on the ocean super cluster. Even before those 75 wells are drilled, this province currently has about 50 per cent of Canada's entire ocean environment. So the future just in offshore oil looks good. We've got similar investments in this year's budget in mining. We're investing in technology, especially in areas such as subsea technology. Any Member of this Legislature who hasn't gone and toured the Marine Institute, I suggest you do so because we are creating and training people right here in this province to be leaders globally in our ocean industries.

With what we're investing in this year's budget, looking at the future, in the industries that we know are going to expand, I encourage all Members to look at this in a more positive light. Again, we've got 40 ambassadors in here. We have a fantastic opportunity that lies ahead for this province, and it will help with immigration, it will help with keeping people here and bringing people home because the work will be there for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Good day, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank all the residents of Ferryland again, before I start, the magnificent District of Ferryland, for their support during the election. Again, I'd like to thank the Minister of Service NL the other night, and all her people that were there to help during the Estimates, and I certainly appreciate their time.

I'd like to mention the driver's licence. We spoke to that the other night in our Estimates. Sometimes it's good to see change and it's certainly got to happen, but sometimes it doesn't happen that easy. When you're dealing with seniors and you're dealing with Internet options, it doesn't always come easy to those people. I got my family home. If somebody says you're going to need a driver's licence done or going to tell my father, who's 75, he needs to get his driver's licence done, without his grandkids that ain't going to be done.

He doesn't have the Internet and he's not going to drive to St. John's to go to the motor vehicle, so sometimes we just got to look at that from a different perspective and be able to see that not everybody can avail of it. I think it's a great idea, no doubt about that, but sometimes we got to have a little look to help the people that don't have the help. My parents do have the help but there are other seniors that do not have that help to be able to get that job done. So yes, change is good, but we still have to look at the people that don't have that option.

Also, back to insulin pumps, I know it's been brought up along the way, and I have a young lady who sent me a letter and I'll just read a couple of notes from it that she had said. Sometimes it goes without being said that you're not always in other people's shoes when you see this stuff happen.

She said, this issue about supporting coverage for people who have aged out of Newfoundland

and Labrador's insulin pump program, who are denied coverage based on the Liberal budget announcement April 16, 2019. It is incredibly bittersweet to see the age gap on insulin pumps and insulin supplies removed, but only for those still under the age of 25. I am thrilled that no other youth or child with type 1 diabetes will have to experience the current feelings in my chest of complete fear and anxiety that I may never see my supplies are covered.

So when you sit back and listen to her say that – and she didn't just throw that out there. She said during the – while this development helps the few it does not support the many. There are still hundreds of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are not covered under this new development. I have not been out of the program even a year yet; yet, I sit here wishing I was born in 1993.

When the program changed from 18 years to 25 years of age, we're out of luck and they were not able to get in the program. Those of us now currently aged out are not even considered on the Liberal budget proposal. Removing this cap should be as promised. The PC platform was coverage for all, and I hope it's still on your agenda – which we're trying to do but sometimes that's not possible – as removing the cap should mean to support those aged outside the cap. Otherwise, for those born April 16, 1994, is considered age discrimination – in her words.

I won't read all the letter, but I'll just read the important ones.

In my age group and up, while still being potential burdens for the health care system of our province for another 40 years or plus, we will be faced with the decision if we are or can continue with the huge cost of living a normal life or if we would have to forego our normal lives just to be able to afford to put food on the table, a roof over our heads. We will need to make a decision whether we should move from this province to be able to get this covered.

This proposed development does not help the 70 per cent of people with type 1 diabetes who are over the age of 25. It is only helping a mere 30 per cent of type 1 diabetes population. That 70 per cent will still be under constant threat of

developing complications such as heart attack, blindness, nerve damage, amputations, pregnancy complications, stroke, kidney failure and risk of dangerously high or low blood sugars.

Now, she didn't just write that not thinking about what she was saying. She's pretty concerned with it. If she's outside that, then that's a major concern. She's trying to go to school. She has to buy a pump – I'm not sure of the price, I'm going to say it's probably \$7,000 or \$8,000. It's a pretty fair investment for somebody who did have it and then lost it. Hopefully, we'll be able to look at that along the way in the next few months and, hopefully, we can get to work on that.

Also, I'll speak on hospitals. Again, no one in particular to blame, but with a situation with myself going to a hospital, I went seven times with kidney issues, being kidney stones. Of course, we don't want to talk about that in here, but it's an issue that certainly can come up. Going there seven times and lining up to get in.

Now, if you have kidney stones there's no lining up to get in, you're going in. You're the same as a colicky baby. You're going in through the door, they're hooking you up and you're getting served. The only one ahead of you is going to be a heart attack. So it's a serious issue.

When you go in there and you're there seven times, you get there 5 o'clock in the morning and they say, well, you'll have to wait until 7 because there's no doctor inside. I said that can't be right, there's no doctor here at 5 o'clock in the morning. You would think there would be one or two on staff, but, no, not the case. You sit there. They give you an IV pump. They got everything ready to wait for the doctor to come in to be able to give you morphine to be able to take care of you and away you go.

The care was great. The place was full, and you talk about people waiting in line. I read on VOCM the other night where the emergency was at a lockdown, or it wasn't locked down but it was at a standstill. No one could get served. They had ambulances that were out. There were no more there.

So sometimes we have to look at that, and if you don't see it, you should go over there and go in the emergency room, when they have you in a hallway for two days. When I go back two days in a row and the same person is out in the hallway not being moved, that's no ones fault. It's just the product of the environment, but sometimes we have to get down to the crux to see what actually happens.

We're sitting here looking at numbers and trying to see where we're going to find budgets, but you really have to get over there and see it. I'm sure everybody along the way has seen that. It's pretty important. There's not much more can be said about it, other than you'd have to witness it and just sit there and see. Because people think we're going to go over as MHAs and we're going to skip the line. That's not going to happen, but if you go there often enough you'll see how it actually works and it is pretty eye opening.

Also, I'm looking at the budget again. I see there are four new schools coming up. I'm glad to see that because we need to have that in the areas, and they all need to be upgraded as well.

Mr. Speaker, we had a school in our area that was on the budget for 2015 and not there. We would love to see that get back in there. We'd love to see it come back up for negotiation again or get back on the table because there's a big need. They moved some students in our area to another school. Right now, the school is managing as it is. We lost some teacher allocation because the numbers moved out, but in two years' time we're going to be back in the same situation.

So it has to be looked at. It's something that we need to fight for and something that we need to see in our area. It's one of the fastest growing areas, outside of the Member for CBS, I'm going to say. Maybe somebody else has another area that's big, but it's a big area and it's a growing area, and the school is much needed in that area.

So, thank you very much and I appreciate your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I had the privilege of sitting in on the Estimates Committee meeting with regard to Fisheries and Land Resources. Certainly, if anything else, I was very impressed with the work the department does and very capable staff and personnel, considering the large geographic area we have to cover.

I was very impressed with Mr. Byrne, the minister, because he actually had certain NDP leanings that came out, and I'll come to it. He did use the word citizenship and for the greater good. My heart swelled briefly and I thought that – sort of like the Grinch, it expanded two times or three times.

It's interesting, in attending a briefing like this you get a very clear sense of the challenges that face Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2017, I was a presenter on behalf of the Canadian Teachers' Federation to Antigua, and I was presenting to the first ever teachers' conference down there. What struck me, Antigua also has a capital of St. John's. They have a basilica of St. John the Baptist, but really the similarities ended there in many ways.

Antigua-Barbuda has 440 square kilometres of land, that's the land mass. Population was 92,000, almost 93,000 – this is according to 2016 statistics. That worked out to be about 213 people per square kilometre. Now Newfoundland, and this is what I was pointing out to them at this time, if you take Newfoundland and Labrador, 405,212 square kilometres, a population of about 528,448, it works out to be about 1.3 people per square kilometre. I guess it gives you a sense of the challenge that we face in designing a budget.

Now, I will tell you that I would rather stay in Newfoundland and visit Barbuda because it's nice having 10 months of winter.

I'm also impressed with the opportunity, with the incentive or the desire to improve and expand agriculture, and certainly with a lot of the newcomers that I taught at Holy Heart and that I have met, a lot of the families come from

agricultural backgrounds. When they left their country, that's what they did. There's an opportunity here, I think, to not only attract newcomers to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador but also there's an opportunity to bring new ideas about agriculture and look at growing new crops. From that point of view, I think that's something positive that I find.

Don't worry, this is not a total love-in, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to start off with that, but it was a learning piece to me again as to what we consider investment. I'll be upfront, with regard to aquaculture, I do have concerns about investing in open sea pen aquaculture. I'll be quite upfront about that. I heard the Minister of Finance use the term investment. Again, as to what we consider investment and what do we consider expenditures.

Certainly, with regard to Greig aquaculture, we learned that 75 per cent of the fish produced would be processed and the rest would be shipped out head-on gutted – HOG. I learned a new term. That's not too bad, a new acronym; but if you look at the Greig proposal, that's 7 million fish they plan to produce yearly and that means almost 2 million fish that are going out of the province.

The other thing is when we look at the concerns, the threat of ISA, of the infectious salmon anemia and its threat not only the pens themselves to the environment, but the use of ISA and its threat to wild Atlantic salmon. The use, then, of chemical treatments in treating such things as sea lice and the effect on the fishery such as the crab fishery, shellfish and other fisheries in the area, what that will mean to those who prosecute those wild fisheries.

We know also that there have been several outbreaks of infectious salmon anemia that have actually shut down production and, therefore, required the shuttering of plants. It demonstrates the real threat of this industry. I often wonder when we're looking at investment, when we're looking at the amount of monies that we're spending are we also factoring in the damage that we are doing to the other industries, to the recreational salmon fishery. What are the mitigation measures? Are they factored into this?

Quite obviously while we're giving incentives to Grieg aquaculture directly, in many ways, we also have programs that are within government spending that basically protects the workers who are laid off as a result of the loss of production. When a production process is shut down, what happens to the people who are employed in the plants? Well, there is a fund then from government that would take care of that. Here's the question: I'm all about protecting the worker, but shouldn't the company be the one protecting the worker, having that fund set aside? That's coming out of the taxpayers so, in some way, we're indirectly subsidizing Grieg, a multinational company, then set aside a rainy-day fund to protect your workers.

I learned also again in the budget, aquatic animal health, that we do pay for monitoring and biosecurity. In a way, in addition to the monetary incentive, we are providing services that come at a cost to the province and again could be charged to the industry that is making a profit from our waters.

Agribusiness and development, it certainly came out very clearly that we have specialists on hand that are basically hired there for training services and for owners of abattoirs in proper standards and so on and so forth, but it's very clear again that we are paying for that investment, or should that be a fee for service that we're asking of the person who's running that business.

I bring that up only because there's been an awful lot of talk about P3s at some time or another and I like to look at this as a P3 in reverse. P3, as I understand it, we're paying a company for a service. We are turning a government service over to a company and they are providing the service. Well, I think in this way here is the government providing a service to private companies, to large and very profitable companies – why aren't we charging for that service that's helping their business?

So this did get me thinking. It got me thinking about what priorities are. It got me thinking about what we call investment. I can tell you, based on the number of doors that are open and the number of comments about the heat, that probably the priority for a lot of people is we got to get the air conditioning fixed.

But here's my thought on this: It's interesting because I taught for 32 years and I can tell you schools didn't have air conditioning and they got a lot hotter than this place right now. But think about the discussion over the last few days about the zero-based budgeting and what we absolutely need. I've heard it from a lot of people here; it's interesting that what is a priority for me is not always a priority for everyone else. It's easy to cut from someone else's district but we've got to start looking at the whole picture.

So right here, I can tell you, fixing the air conditioning here would be the last, on the bottom rung, and maybe we'll get a taste of what it is like for a lot of our students at this time of the year. Don't worry, I'm almost done. I'm watching it. You'll hear me talk more about that over the next few times, and done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to just have a few words about Concurrence. Of course, this ties into the budget and to the Estimates. I think we all realize where we are financially and we all have to be cognizant of that. There's not a lot of extra money to go around; arguably, there's not enough money to go around. I suppose there's never enough money to go around, but it's even worse at this point in time in our history and, hopefully, things are going to turn around.

I think that's evidenced by the fact that even in this budget – I don't know if it's actually in the budget document, but only yesterday or the day before or whatever it was we passed a bill where we borrowed another \$1.2 billion, and we all have to be cognizant of that. That's another \$1.2 billion thrown on our absolutely massive debt. We're paying 1.1, 1.2, thereabouts, every year just to service our debt. So I think it's important that we keep that in mind.

I just wanted to raise a couple of issues that are really not going to cost us any money but I think there are a couple of things that we could do, not necessarily from a budgetary point of view, but I

think in the spirit of openness, transparency and restoring more faith in the public, of our public institutions, of this House of Assembly, and how business is done in Newfoundland and Labrador.

One of those points I actually raised in Question Period, not this week but last week. I asked the question, at the time would the government be prepared to bring in legislation that would deal with the issue of numbered companies receiving benefits from government? Whether that be through grants, or unrepayable loans, or tax breaks or whatever the case might be to take a look at what legislation, if any, currently exists to deal with that with numbered companies, whether direct or indirect.

I understand when we start talking indirect, that can get pretty dicey and maybe that's why we should have the discussion, have the debate to understand what indirect would actually mean. Obviously, if a company is receiving funding from government and indirectly they're buying a few office supplies or something, I'm not so sure that we need to deal with directors of the numbered company for that. But if they have some sort of a special arrangement and it can be shown that a numbered company is directly or is benefitting in a significant way from taxpayer funds, then I believe – in the interest of openness and transparency – we should know, the public should know, who the directors of that company are.

Now, when I asked the question, unfortunately, I didn't get an answer. Unfortunately, the only answer I got from the Minister of TCII went on a spiel about Canopy Growth, what a great deal it was and so on. I say to the minister and I say to the Premier, I say to all my colleagues opposite, that it's not about Canopy Growth. I want to make that clear. I know that's how it came from that, that was the impetus for it but it's not about Canopy Growth and finding out who the person is at Plank Road.

Everybody in this House knows who's at Plank Road. We all know that. We're playing these little games. We all know who it is. That's not what it's about. It's about looking at the policy on numbered companies just to see what it is, what the rules are, and if there are ways that we can improve the process to improve disclosures

so that taxpayers know where their money is going. That's all it is.

I say to the government again, that's not something that's going to cost us any money. I think it's something that would be welcomed by the people. It's not a witch hunt on whoever's at Plank Road, I couldn't care less to be honest with you, in that regard; not about Canopy Growth. It's about, for the future, having policies in place so that taxpayers know where their money is going. I think that's a fair, reasonable request and I put that out there to the Premier and to the government.

A second thing that I wanted to raise that I think we can do, that, again, is not something that's an expenditure of funds, per se, but I think it's important to the democratic process, I think it's important in the name of openness and transparency, I want to go back to *Budget 2016*. I don't want to talk about *Budget 2016* in terms of the harsh measures. We've been there, done that and so on. It's not about dredging that up again.

What the government did say, at the time, was we were in a much worse financial position than we believed; what we were told, what we believed. We got in government and all of a sudden we were staring down the barrel of \$2.7 billion if we did nothing. We weren't able to pay the bills. We wouldn't be able to meet payroll and so on. That's what the government said.

So, again, another reform that I think we really should look at, not about costing money and to make it a more even playing field when we go to the elections again. Not just the next election but the one after that and the one after that and the one after that, and I think would benefit the process, is there should be some sort of a policy or legislation or whatever it would be in place –

MR. OSBORNE: It's there now.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Okay.

The minister is saying it's there now. I don't remember passing anything in the House on it, so maybe the minister can correct that. Nothing came up in the House of Assembly that I voted

on. Maybe it's a policy, I don't know if it's legislation. Maybe it's just something that you want to do or you say you're going to do versus we have to do legislation.

Certainly, there should be a requirement that prior to any provincial election that the books need to be opened and there has to be a full accounting of the public finances for the public to see, prior to an election, whether that's 60 days, 90 days, whatever it is, so that the taxpayers know where we stand, financially. Then, as parties and independent Members are coming forward with their policies, their platforms, their ideas, the public knows where we stand, financially, so we can't go promising stuff on either side; can't go promising stuff without the public knowing, well, how are you going to pay for this because here's what the finances are right now, so how are you going to do it? That was what the government said when they took the action they did in 2016, that they didn't know.

Let's eliminate that problem. Let's eliminate that by having legislation in place. As I said, the Minister of Finance, I think, said we've done it. I'm glad, if he has –

MR. OSBORNE: (Inaudible) voted on three months.

MR. LANE: Three months.

MR. OSBORNE: Three months prior.

MR. LANE: Okay.

You're saying it was voted on?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Okay, all right.

Anyway, the minister says it was voted on. I honestly don't recall that coming up, unless it was part of something else. Anyway, that is something that we need to do. If the minister says that it's now enshrined in legislation, that it must happen, then I applaud him for it.

The other thing is the fixed election date. We have a fixed election date in place and this time it wasn't – it was followed based on what the

legislation says; however, we need to look at eliminating the ability for us to forego that fixed election date. You should have to stick to the fixed election date unless there is some extraordinary circumstance. It has to be some extraordinary circumstance that prevents you from having an election on the fixed election date.

If we need to stagger that date so it doesn't clash now with a federal election into the future or stagger the year, even, then that's what we should do, but we should maintain that fixed election date and not have the ability to manipulate it in any way and call early elections or call elections whenever you decide that you want to call elections because it maybe in the best interest or convenient for the government of the day.

That's not about this government but any government in the future. That's another thing that I really think we should do. If we did all those things, I think it would absolutely improve the system.

With that said, my time is pretty much done and I'll take my seat.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a pleasure, I'll say this again, it's always a pleasure to stand in your place in this House to speak for the people who voted you in and elected us all. We all tend to do that and it's very important. It's good to see during this budget debate that all Members of the House, both sides, Opposition, Third Party and independents, everyone are standing to speak.

It wasn't the case in other years and maybe it's a different Parliament, but I think it's great.

I've always believed that every Member, no matter what party stripe, should stand and speak in their place on the budget. Regardless, good, bad or indifferent, they should stand. It's what

people elect them to do. It's a very important document. Our budget is everything in this province. That keeps the wheels rolling, keeps government moving. It's very important.

As you heard today in speaking, my colleague from Torngat Mountains, powerful speech. Actually, my colleague from Conception Bay East - Bell Island, the Opposition House Leader, he did a great job, too. It's passion and it's - on both sides of that. I hear that across the House. It's great to hear and it's important for the people that they represent to hear them speak. I've always believed that. I guess we've been on record as being critical sometimes when all Members never spoke, when we felt that it's important for the people they represent to speak.

On Concurrence; I commend the Minister of Transportation and Works and staff. We were here for a little shy of four hours last week, and very open and very appreciative of all the questions he was given. He answered everything we asked. We may not agree with all the answers but every question we asked, he was very receptive. He did a great job, him and his staff.

On that note, I guess it depends on the perspective. I sat on the government side with the former administration when I worked in ministers' offices. I sat across the way and I sat in boardrooms preparing for Estimates. It's a unique experience. I know how the saying goes, I know what the other side are doing.

Actually, I even predicted to the minister what the staff were having for supper the night of Estimates, and I was right. So, there you go. That's serving time in that department. I do know that department quite well. Going on five years now as critic, you learn a lot.

They did a great job. That's something that I said on the night of Estimates and I'll say it here today, sometimes we take it for granted, we're going to Estimates. Now our staff, the same thing applies. They're great. They spend endless hours and days preparing for Estimates for all of us. What I can I say, they're an exceptional group as well.

Sometimes you come in here and you sit down and the questions are three hours of Estimates

and there are questions back and forth. People don't see what happens in the backrooms. The backrooms of both sides of this House is incredible. They're working day and night to make us look good.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: I just like to always say that. I do appreciate what it's like sitting on that side of the House. They did a great job.

From all indication, I can't say for every Estimate, most Estimates have been ran well. I know in the Government Services Committee, which I'm a Member of, I think for the most part it's been well done.

I have another couple of minutes left, and I think I'll just probably touch on an issue that was discussed here in the House today. I'd like to repeat it because I think any issue that's important enough to bring up and it's important in your district and it's important to the province, you should repeat it. It's a reinforcement.

It's the personal care home issue, Mr. Speaker. The minister back and forth; he's had questions on this numerous, numerous, numerous times over the last four to six months or longer, just since that policy has been implemented. It's kind of a defiant attitude but that's fine, and I understand that, too. From sitting on that side of the House, I get the fact of what you're doing when you sit there. I get the fact of what ministers have to do in defending these decisions. I get it.

When you talk to the seniors, you talk to the families that have been affected, when you visit the homes - and I have. I do have the highest percentage in the province of personal care homes, bar none; and I got community care homes, too. I got a lot of them.

I talk to the homeowners, I talk to the seniors, but that's the thing. The waters get muddy there because we're into pot shots about personal care home owners and what they did. That's not my issue. I know a lot of them, I respect a lot of them and I'm friends with a lot of them. That's not my concern.

My concern is the people who are in these homes. That's the ones who are suffering, the ones that are not getting subsidies. The ones that are home lonely in their house, they're depressed, they're sad, they want to go into these homes. They're looking to go in these homes. They can't afford to pay the fee. They're looking for a subsidy to help them but they're deemed illegible because they don't tick the box on one of the requirements. That's the issue.

We can sit here all day long and ask questions back and forth in this House and have whatever we want and do whatever. We can put out letters, we can stand in front of the cameras. That's the issue, and that's what seniors are asking. That's the problem. It's a very simple problem, a very simple fix, but now they're going to sit in their own homes and they're going to whither away. They're going to have trouble getting personal care. It's still a cost to the province, still a cost to government, and they're sad. So what's it worth? What's it worth to someone?

I've only got a few seconds left. I just wanted to, in this opportunity, remind the people and remind the people in this House, that's the issue. It's not about the home owners. It's about the residents, it's about the seniors, and that's what matters most.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

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

It's a pleasure this afternoon to have an opportunity to take just a few minutes to talk about concurrence. The Estimates from Transportation and Works, that I think the Member for CBS just alluded to, took place a little over a week ago, Mr. Speaker, and the Department of Transportation and Works – first of all, I want to thank the staff and the work they do around Estimates. A tremendous piece of work. The department expends over \$500

million every year, and all of that \$500 million is accounted for in our Estimates. So I want to thank our staff, led by Deputy Minister Tracy King, and the entire staff for getting us to where we were in Estimates.

As well, the Member opposite and the Leader of the Third Party who also put a lot of work in the Estimates because they actually drill down and knew questions on practically every single line in that book. We actually learned a new phrase about three-quarters of the way through Estimates, it's called a whisper of pavement. We haven't exactly quite defined a whisper of pavement yet, but the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi actually coined that phrase and it's one that's been used here in the House a number of times since. So, not only do I want to thank the staff at Transportation and Works, but also the staff from the Official Opposition and the Leader of Third Party and their staff for their involvement.

I'm just going to take a couple of minutes, actually, to quickly just outline some of the things that the Department of Transportation and Works actually is responsible for throughout the province and how we spend that money.

We have 9,700 kilometres of pavement in the province. We have over 1,300 bridges. We expend about \$13,200 every year per kilometre on maintenance, whether it be winter and summer maintenance. That's a big number when you think about the 10,000 kilometres of pavement that we have in the province.

In winter '18-'19, we used 210,000 tons of salt and sand in this province; 633,000 litres of paint on our roads every year. These are just a few things where the budget of the Department of Transportation and Works actually goes every year.

Interestingly enough, I noticed in these notes some of the things that still happen here. The department is responsible for over eight million pieces of incoming mail every year. Even though email has become very common and very much what we think is still used by most people, the department receives over eight million pieces of mail each year for all government departments. The department is also responsible for over 3,000 vehicles. Combined

in the department, we have almost 1,500 employees. That's what our Estimates gets us to. It's a great collage of infrastructure and work that's done around government and done by this department. This is how the money is spent.

We're going to see some good infrastructure projects in this province this coming construction season. We're going to see the start of the new Corner Brook acute care hospital, a project that's valued at over \$500 million and long overdue on the West Coast of this province.

I give credit to our Premier and our MHAs for the West Coast who made this a priority in *Budget 2015*. It's a promise that we made back then and it's a promise that we're going to keep to replace that aging infrastructure. We're also replacing aging infrastructure from the mental health facility, another very important commitment that we made and we're keeping.

My colleague for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave reminds me all the time about – and the work that she's put in, and not only her but other Members of this caucus when it comes to schools in their districts. The Member for Gander, the Minister of Health, was very much a part of ensuring that that new school construction started. The new Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune is very much onto the file, now since he's become elected, of the new school in his district and other infrastructure needs. The new Member for Mount Scio on our side of the House has picked this up very quickly and has very quickly become an advocate for her residents on issues that our department deals with in her district, Mr. Speaker.

It's very good to see that our two new MHAs were very quick to pick up the gauntlet. I'm getting a look here that it's time for me to conclude.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure I'll get an opportunity – and I apologize to everybody for the heat issues here this week, but, hopefully, next week the weather will still be good and it will still be hot here in the House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the Concurrence Motion on the Government Services Committee?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

On motion, Report of Government Services Estimates Committee, carried.

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

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

At this time, again, I'd like to thank all Members for their co-operation in moving the agenda forward.

Given the hour of the day, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, that the House do now adjourn.

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

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: And I remind everybody – I remind those folks, there's a Health and Community Services Estimates meeting scheduled to start here at 6 p.m., and my condolences to those involved.

MR. SPEAKER: 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 House stands adjourned until tomorrow,
Tuesday, the 25th day of June, at 1:30 o'clock.

Thank you.

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