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Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Are the House Leaders ready?

Government House Leader ready?

MR. CROCKER: Yes, Sir

MR. SPEAKER: Opposition House Leader ready?

MR. BRAZIL: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Third Party Members ready? Independents ready?

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today, we will hear Members' statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Torngat Mountains, Exploits, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Placentia - St. Mary's and Humber - Bay of Islands.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I rise and pay tribute to Jane Shiwak of Rigolet, Nunatsiavut.

Jane Shiwak represents kindness, love and respect. Her life story: victorious. Evil did not break her or rob us of her loving soul.

Jane began residential school at the age of five. She couldn't eat some of the food served. I would throw it up and be made to eat the food I had thrown up. I was often beaten. At times, I would be stripped naked and beaten in front of other students and classmates. My whole body bruised black and blue. There were times I would be locked in a dark room and left there for hours.

The remaining words I will speak are from the late Anita Riche, daughter of Jane Shiwak. Jane had a profound influence on my life. She shaped me into the person I am today. She faced bad experiences but never let that define her nor hinder her in any way. She helped many people;

taking women into her own home, those who faced domestic violence. She would always give. Her residential schools experience is used to make this world a better place. Attending meetings and youth symposiums, elder symposiums, Jane shared her story, and during the process, helped others heal.

Jane is a renowned artisan and teacher of seagrass weaving, traditional clothing and Inuit dolls. Her skills and knowledge keep our traditions and culture alive. Her memories keep our history alive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, on September 19 the president of Hockey NL presented the association's newest Life Member during their AGM to Murray Roberts of Botwood.

Murray was elected Life Member by the provincial hockey association. He began with the Botwood Area Minor Hockey Association in 1995 as the initiation director, moving to the association's president position in 1996. After serving as president for the Central hockey association executive, he then became the public relations officer for the provincial association minor council in 1999.

Mr. Speaker, in 2000, Murray was elected vice-president of Hockey NL and served that position until the end of the 2018-2019 hockey season. Murray was involved in bringing forth the provincial comprehensive screening process for volunteers and Safety Towards Others Program in Newfoundland and Labrador and helped protect players on the ice.

Murray was also a Speak Out facilitator, which is important to the awareness and prevention of bullying, abuse and harassment in the sport that was introduced in 1997.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Mr. Murray Roberts of Botwood on his induction as Life Member into Hockey NL.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port au Grave.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I would like to recognize a woman who continues to demonstrate strength in mind, body and soul.

Mary Butler of Butlerville is well known and loved throughout Conception Bay North. She grew up in Bay Roberts and moved to Butlerville as a young woman where she married Rex, the love of her life, and have three children and now seven grandchildren.

In July, Mary received news that would change life forever. Doctors told her that she had brain cancer. She decided not to take the aggressive treatments and instead dedicate her time to family and friends and to enjoy every day as if it were her last. It is said that family has always been the most important focus in Mary's life, and Christmas is her favourite time of year.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Christmas came early this year for Mary, her family and the entire community as lights and decorations illuminated Butlerville and Shearstown and residents came together to show their support. A big family turkey dinner was enjoyed, complete with a parade, music and good cheer.

We admire Mary for her strength and faith, as she isn't angry or asking why, but instead continues to practice gratitude and goodwill.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all hon. Members join me in wishing Mary and her family all the very best.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

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

Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Bravery Award was established in 1984 under the authority of the *Bravery Award Act* to recognize citizens of the province who have risked their lives and safety to render aid to another person.

On April 24, 2018, while Matthew Fleming was working in St. Vincent's, he saw the boat of Maurice Gibbons spin out of control and eject him into the water. Without hesitation, Matthew put on a lifejacket, grabbed a rope and jumped into the cold water of Holyrood Pond to save Mr. Gibbons. Matthew swam an estimated 10 minutes to reach Mr. Gibbons and successfully pulled him back to shore to emergency personnel. Thanks to Matthew's brave actions and quick thinking, Mr. Gibbons made a full recovery.

Due to Matthew's selfless assistance, in July, as the Member of the House of Assembly for the District of Placentia - St. Mary's, I had the honour of presenting Matthew with the Newfoundland and Labrador Award for Bravery in Peter's River in the company of his family and closest friends.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Matthew Fleming for his selfless act of heroism.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians always come together to support a great cause, and today I want to recognize one such volunteer. Cindy Wells of Irishtown who, for the past nine years, has spearheaded the annual Ronald McDonald Red Shoe Crew-Walk in her hometown.

Cindy and her family has been passionate about Ronald McDonald House since their stay in Edmonton House in 1999 when their daughter, Allie, was born and needed to stay in hospital for over a month.

Since Ronald McDonald House opened in St. John's, Cindy has been there to give support and raise money for this place that is so important to so many families. To quote Cindy: "You never fully appreciate what having a place like Ronald McDonald House means until you need it."

While the walk was different this year than usual, that didn't hinder Cindy and her dedicated group of volunteers as they raised almost \$6,000 again this year, bringing the total raised in the past nine years to over \$50,000.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking Cindy and her group with their continuous support and commitment to this worthwhile cause.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

MR. LOVELESS: On September 23, I had the pleasure of participating in National Forest Week and National Tree Day celebrations at C.C. Loughlin Elementary School in Corner Brook.

Mr. Speaker, 2020 marks the 100th National Forest Week. It presents a great opportunity to raise awareness, particularly among our youth, about the true value of our forest resources and consider how they positively contribute to our health and happiness.

I was joined by students, teachers, conservation officers with the Forest Service of Newfoundland and Labrador, and special guest, Smoky Bear, on a beautiful fall morning to plant a red maple tree to commemorate National Forest Week and National Tree Day.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture outreach education efforts, forestry staff also provided 3,000 tree seedlings produced at the Centre of Agriculture and Forestry Research in Wooddale to students at schools throughout the province.

In addition, a provincial poster contest based on this year's National Forest Week theme, Healthy Forests, Healthy Future, remains open to K-12 students until October 16. I encourage all students in the province to submit an entry.

I also wish to use this occasion to thank our province's dedicated team of forest professionals who take great pride in the sustainable management and protection of our forests. Their efforts not only support our commitment to healthy forests, but also benefit forest sector jobs and the communities that rely on them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, National Forest Week and National Tree Day provide a great opportunity to celebrate our forests and to encourage increased public awareness about their importance.

Coming from Central Newfoundland, I certainly appreciate how important and valuable this resource is. It is great to see young people in particular becoming informed as well.

Mr. Speaker, many communities and families of our province depend on forests as part of their way of life and we must all have an appreciation for how vital this resource is in our culture and our economy. As the minister said, this year theme's was Healthy Forests, Healthy Future. We would like to commend all those who take care of our forests so they will be preserved for generations to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement and join him in acknowledging National Tree Day and the 100th anniversary of National Forest Week.

My late father loved trees and rarely missed an opportunity to plant one. It is said that trees are the lungs of our planet. Any event which raises awareness of forest resources, especially among our youth, is worthwhile.

I, too, recognize the valuable work of his department's staff in managing our forest resources.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, October is Cyber Security Awareness Month. This internationally recognized campaign is focused on helping all Canadians be more secure online by being informed and knowing the simple steps to take to protect themselves, their families, their workplace and their devices.

The global pandemic has resulted in people becoming more reliant on technology. The devices we use help us stay informed, provide entertainment and learning opportunities and help us connect with family and friends.

This year's theme is: Cyber Security for the Remote Workforce. Mr. Speaker, government employees are increasingly using technology to perform their jobs, whether at the office or working remotely, so it is important to be diligent in our daily activities.

As government continues to navigate a remote work environment, there is still a requirement to manage and protect government information by maintaining sound cybersecurity practices. Cybersecurity is no longer just about employing technology to protect against cyberattacks. People are the primary target for cybercriminals, and cybercrime is on the rise worldwide.

Mr. Speaker, public service employees can reduce the cyber threat to government's information and infrastructure by following just a few key practices: never disclose your government-issued username and password; never click on links or attachments in emails from unknown sources; never use your government-issued email address for personal use; always lock your computer or mobile device when not in use.

The provincial government continues its strong commitment for cybersecurity education and awareness across the public sector to ensure everyone remains vigilant. Information protection is everyone's responsibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement and a reminder to all of us that we should take precautions when interacting in an online environment.

As this public health pandemic has pushed more of us to do business online, it has also increased our risk of cyber threat and cybercrime. Whether online shopping, making reservations or conducting business online, we must all remain vigilant of where and when we enter our personal information.

The minister provided some important suggestions for members of the public service, but there are also precautions which members of the public can take to protect their own personal information. These include verifying websites before entering information; not clicking links in emails if you do not know the sender; and my favourite tip: if something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

I encourage all residents of the province to do their part to help each other in staying safe online.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the hon. Member for an advance copy of her statement and recognizing Cybersecurity Awareness Month.

Given the number of high-profile attacks on private citizens and government agencies in the past years, we would like to voice our support for initiatives to protect the public infrastructure and safeguard information.

We would also like to recognize the employees at OCIO for their diligent work in protecting the information that is entrusted to government.

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.

Is the Liberal government going to keep the promise or break the promise they made last year when campaigning that consumer electricity rates would be kept to 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I can say that this Liberal government has been cleaning up the mess of Muskrat Falls for a number of years. We have worked very diligently, very prudently, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the project was finished and we also ensured that the ratepayers of this province

would not bear the overall cost, unlike the Members opposite, who in their initial concept of Muskrat Falls were going to drive the rates of electricity to over 15 cents.

Mr. Speaker, we've been working hard with the federal government to find solutions. We have been very open and transparent about our plan to ensure that rates do not increase due to the Muskrat Falls project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: As the House will note, Mr. Speaker, we didn't get a clear answer to the question about 13.5 cents, which was a key and pivotal platform on which this government ran a year and a half ago.

If the government intends to keep the promise of 13.5 cents, why is the budget silent on this and why are the terms of reference for the new Paddick rate mitigation committee also silent?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

The Member opposite tends to try and put words in other people's mouths.

I will say that we have been very clear in our rate mitigation and management plan due to Muskrat Falls – extremely clear. We said that the ratepayers of this province will not bear the expense of Muskrat Falls. I will reiterate that again, Mr. Speaker, in case he didn't hear it: The ratepayers of this province will not bear the expense of Muskrat Falls. That means that whatever the rate is – because right now we know it's been delayed due to the pandemic – whatever the rate is at the time will be the rate it is at the time. We absolutely know right at this moment it's just below 13.5 cents.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think the Member opposite is trying to mince words and confuse people. But let me be clear: It is only this government who

has made sure that Muskrat Falls was taken care of.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Now the answer I'm hearing is the rate will be whatever it will be at the time Muskrat Falls comes into effect. I didn't hear a 13.5 cents.

The round of rate mitigation talks that just failed focused on the magic of financial restructuring. What issue made the talks fail?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I will disagree with the preamble, or some of the wording that the Member used when he talked about the efforts has failed. The reality is that the efforts continue on. As the Member knows, this is not a simple process. The fact is we have a project that is still ongoing, a project that is still trying to be completed. As we saw the update from Mr. Marshall very recently, we still have a ways to go and there still are possible issues that may arise, but thankfully they've managed to keep it fairly on course compared to how it proceeded in the early days.

So what I would say is we continue to work on rate mitigation with the federal government in the hopes of ensuring that all of our citizens are not stuck with rate shock.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: We can all sympathize with the minister's sentiment that he doesn't want consumers stuck with rate shock but I as well heard no mention of 13.5 cents.

Did the talks fail because the federal Liberals refused to invest new money?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology

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

Again, I have to correct the Member when he uses the term: the talks failed. That's simply not the case. I wish it was that easy, that we could come up with an agreement just like that, but it takes a lot to clean up the mess that the crowd around you created.

So what I would say, Mr. Speaker, is we continue to work with our federal counterparts on figuring out rate mitigation but at the same time ensuring that this project gets completed in as timely a fashion as we can hope.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier mentioned friction between Nalcor and the government over rate mitigation.

What issue caused the friction, and why did government put Nalcor chair, Brendan Paddick, in charge of the new committee if there's friction with Nalcor?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Again, I'll leave it to the Premier to be able to fully discuss the words that he used, but what I think, if I were to take a guess at what he was talking about, is that we have seen through the value of an inquiry is that there have been issues with the communication in the past. A lot of this, though, I think we would be talking about the past, and we all know you just have to look at the extensive findings of Justice LeBlanc and some of the issues that were there in the past.

What I will say going forward, thankfully, is that people like Stan Marshall have come on. All the employees there I know are working towards the best interests of getting this project done, and thankfully we have someone like Brendan Paddick who has a worldwide ability. We've seen some of the deals he's done. We have somebody of his capability trying to help out the people of his native province.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, another nonresponsive answer from the government because we're no further ahead now in understanding what is the source of friction between the government and Nalcor.

Does this mean that Nalcor won the argument and the government lost? Who's really in charge?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Again, I have to commend the Member opposite because if you can ask that question with a straight face then, Sir, I am very impressed.

The reality is that when I sat over on that side we used to joke about who really was the Premier, and I think the inquiry bore out the fact that there were questions to be asked. What I can say is that it's this government that has taken this project that is the biggest boondoggle in the history of this province and we have gotten it back on track.

Again, we have a lot of work left to do, but, again, Sir, I would look at some of the Members that sit around you on your team and ask them what they were doing.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on September 24, the minister announced that the province would return forfeited security deposits to the oil industry in efforts to stimulate exploration.

I ask the minister: How much will be returned to the industry in 2020?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I appreciate the question from the Member. It's a very important topic and one that we're quite proud of; an innovative approach to try to stimulate what is a devastated industry right now. I will correct one part. The money has not been given back. The money comes from bid deposits that may be forfeited if this work is not done.

What we've suggested is that – I think that amount is around \$40 million that's eligible for this year. That amount will fluctuate from year to year depending on, again, a number of factors, including what is forfeited. Our goal is to return nothing, because that would mean that the work that these companies bid on is actually done.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, how many jobs will be created this year in 2020 because of this incentive?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Well, obviously, it's very hard to figure that out, given the fact that we just announced this and

we have to see if these companies are going to use this incentive, which is just one of the ideas that we've put out there to spur the industry to continue exploration, which is one of the levers that we can pull.

What we can say is that we hope to be able to assist this industry. We only have certain things that we can do, but the goal is, again, to do what we can.

Right now, there's going to be a significant investment, possibly, depending on if these companies were to partake. We'll continue to work with them and we look forward to the bid deposit on November 4.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're hearing more smoke and mirrors, unfortunately. This is not what the people in the oil and gas industry were looking for when this announcement was made by the Premier and the minister.

MR. CROCKER: (Inaudible.)

MR. PETTEN: The House Leader wants to interrupt me, Mr. Speaker.

How will it be decided who is awarded the incentive funds?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I know what it's like to ask questions on that side. Again, this is one of those attempts where you try to cloud what is actually a very positive initiative and one that's meant to help work with an industry that, right now, is devastated worldwide.

The reality is that there is still work left to do. There will be a pool of money, and there are a lot of things we have to keep an eye on to ensure that negative repercussions don't come from

that. What I will say is that there are a lot of different things. It depends on which companies want to partake. Right now, we know the amount is up to \$40 million. That amount could increase.

Again, I would come back to the original point, which is we hope that nobody avails of it because that means the money has been spent on the explorations as originally intended.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I caution the minister. This is not immediate action, Minister; \$40 million is not what the industry cried out for when they protested on the steps of the Confederation Building. In my opinion, it's just buying time. That's what I thought then and it's become more evident today.

How many additional wells will be drilled this year in 2020 because of this incentive?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Again, I think the Member knows that there isn't an answer to the question he asked. He's asking a question for which he doesn't really want an answer. The reality is that we have announced this, but it's not just the government that has the ability to do anything here. We have to work with an industry.

Right now, we have a trillion-dollar loss in this industry worldwide. We are competing globally, so what I would continue to say is that this is just one initiative that we put forward. We look forward to working with the oil and gas council to continue the options that may be available to deal with this industry that's been devastated worldwide.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, 20,000 workers want an answer, as well as myself.

Mr. Speaker, the minister announced this reinvestment as an easy answer. This incentive does little to stimulate exploration today, here and now in 2020, when it is needed urgently. The minister doesn't even have the details on how the program will work. Funds will only be available if exploration does not happen.

Will the minister admit that this announcement was reactive and not proactive?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

In case the Member didn't remember, I remember what it was like to be on the steps of Confederation Building dealing with this issue, which is affecting the entire world right now. The fact is that the provincial government is just one player. We have to deal with a devastated industry; we're dealing with the federal government; we're dealing with a number of things.

One thing I will point out is that when I was out there, I heard positive words from the head of Noia; I heard positive words from CAPP. We've heard positive words from the industry. In fact, I've heard positive words from people that are working in that industry. They realize the situation that the provincial government is in. They realize that we're trying to deal with an issue for which we are just one of the players.

Again, we will continue on, but the offer to the Member still stands. If he has any solutions to offer, I look forward to having that discussion.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The CEO said that Labrador-Grenfell Health does not have a formalized process for their out-of-province health care workers.

Minister, after eight months – after eight months – of dealing with COVID in this province, how is this even possible?

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

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

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of Labrador-Grenfell. I was talking to the Member for Lake Melville; I think we may have set a record for a drive-through test site over the course of last week. They were tired but they were still pumped up.

Every travel exemption given to any individual contains specific unique instructions for their situation that clarifies exactly what the expectations are under the terms of their exemption order. There is one specific for health care. There is one specific for out-of-province workers and there is one specific for compassionate grounds, Mr. Speaker.

Those are operational issues that Labrador-Grenfell have been told to address and they have done so. The rest of the RHAs are in a similar position.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A failure is a failure is a failure, putting our most vulnerable at risk, Mr. Speaker.

The PC Opposition has been pushing for testing of essential workers who are coming into our

province. Now, our province has a positive case in a health care worker who did not follow the self-isolation requirement, putting our most vulnerable people at risk.

When is this government going to break its chronic pattern of inaction, especially when lives are at stake, and finally start testing at our borders?

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

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

There is no test on the market, as yet, anywhere on the globe that will predict who will get COVID-19. We have a robust system, and I would argue that it has worked because there have been no more positive cases in Labrador-Grenfell since last week.

Our public health tracing is working. It is the best in the country, and we have contained each case on its situation when it arrives in this province, Mr. Speaker.

If there are ways to do better and new technology that is available, as it becomes available, we will incorporate that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the weekend, we sadly learned of a death in the Western Health region. This individual is confirmed to have COVID-19.

I ask the minister: Did this individual pass due to COVID-19 or was the cause of death unrelated?

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

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

I think it's important, at some point, that we pause for a second and recognize that we are dealing here with a grieving family.

What I can tell the Member opposite, from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, my understanding is that COVID-19 will be put on the death certificate as a supplemental cause of death.

The information that public health releases is that which is necessary to safeguard the population on their health. We have a line to draw between that and personal, private health information. That is where that line sits with this case, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We all sympathize and grieve with the family here, but people need to know exactly what risk people are being put into because we're not doing the proper things and taking proactive approaches here.

I ask the minister: Did this person know that they had COVID-19 or was the test conducted after the individual past?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I have to take issue with the Member's preamble. We are doing the proper things.

I would point out that The Conference Board of Canada have suggested that Newfoundland and Labrador and Atlantic Canada are an example for other jurisdictions to follow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAGGIE: At a time when there are over a thousand new cases a day in some provinces, we are seeing scattered cases. We are controlling those as and when they appear, Mr. Speaker.

The system is that we are learning as well and as new ideas and new technology are proven, where they will help, we will incorporate them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House also acknowledge the great work that our health care workers have done and all those related to ensuring that people are safe in Newfoundland and Labrador. But, Mr. Speaker, one case of COVID-19 is one case too many in Newfoundland and Labrador. We need to be proactive to ensure that doesn't happen to anybody.

A CBC story posted this morning said: "CBC News has made repeated inquiries and overtures to report as many details about these cases as possible, but information has been inconsistent and sometimes incorrect."

I ask the minister: Why has the department provided inconsistent and incorrect information related to these cases?

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

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

I'm delighted the Member opposite raised that. I was actually very disappointed with that article because it is totally inaccurate. Every time this weekend that a call was put through for a question about cases in this province, it was answered, Mr. Speaker. It was answered.

The mere fact that I arranged an interview with that radio station for tomorrow morning does not mean I am mum on Sunday. That was arranged on Friday. They have totally misrepresented that situation, Mr. Speaker.

The facts of the case are that information evolves. Sometimes a test needs to be repeated, and rather than come out with inaccurate information, we wait and we get it right. That's why we're leading the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, everybody on this side, again, wants to make sure we get it right 100 per cent of the time. To do that, the right information has to be shared and it has to be consistent. That's not what we're hearing. It's not only the CBC story; there are other media outlets who've said the same thing. They can't get consistent information.

The testing pilot program for rotational workers in our province is quite different than the situation in PEI. In PEI, rotational workers are tested on day zero to two, four to seven and 10 to 12.

Why are there contradicting interpretations by government on what is safe among provinces in the Atlantic bubble?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think I speak on behalf of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in commending Dr. Haggie and Dr. Fitzgerald, the chief medical officer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: They have been available to us. They have been consistent in their communications, Mr. Speaker. Their teams have been consistent in their communications. They deserve our respect. They deserve our thanks. They deserve our support. I, for one, would like to commend them for their leadership of leading the country in terms of COVID-19.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, this –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, this is about findings to ensure that everybody's safe. If it means we've got to work together, if it means we've got to bring out issues we think need to be addressed, that's important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We don't make this up. These are things that people bring to our attention, and it's important that we bring it in the public eye so that people can address it, if there are shortfalls or if there are people falling through the cracks. It's still about everybody's safety in this province. We, collectively, need to be responsible for that.

Minister, the flu season is fast approaching. While the department has expanded who can provide the flu shots, there's a difference in the reimbursement rates. Can you explain that?

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

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

I'm pleased to announce that we have, through negotiation with the Pharmacists' Association, made a flu shot universally accessible at a rate they negotiated, Mr. Speaker. We have also reinstated the Medical Association's fee for flu shots at the rate they negotiated. Those are matters of negotiations, and, by and large, we don't do that in public.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding from talking to some of those associations that the minister directed or the department directed that this was the only monies that were available and there were three-tiered payment systems, which doesn't seem right when you're giving the same service, but we will let that be discussed in the realm of the media.

In the budget, the minister was directed to strike a task force on health care focused on delivering a 10-year health accord.

Will the minister provide the details on the task force, including membership, terms of reference and timelines?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think this is an opportunity, again, to repeat what I said in Estimates to the Members opposite for a wider audience. This is an opportunity to look at how we can shift from an illness system to a wellness system, and to look at the things that really make a significant difference in people's long-term health.

We know and have known for years that 75 per cent of someone's health is determined by factors outside the health care system. The role of the health care task force will be to look at what can be done with redeploying some of the savings that we generate or the cost avoidance we've generated by keeping our cost curve flat for five years – the only jurisdiction in Canada to do that in health, I may add – and how we can redeploy that in the social determinants of health, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

From that I take that we're still not sure what the composition of the committee is going to be and what the timelines are going to be. Do we wait until the 10th year to see improvements here or are they going to be successive improvements as we move forward? We will get to see that, I guess, over the next number of months, hopefully.

Mr. Speaker, a former deputy minister of Health who ran for the leadership of the Liberal Party publicly said that he had presented government

with a plan to save over \$200 million in health care expenditures.

Can you confirm that this plan was submitted and rejected?

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

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

There have been a variety of cost-saving suggestions, cost-avoidance measures suggested over the years, from the attrition plans we inherited in 2015 all the way through to some that have been fairly speculative. I would suggest that this falls in the latter. We work hard to recognize cost containment.

Quite frankly, one of the challenges of health care, Mr. Speaker, is that the money we spend, while some would regard it as a cost, I would actually argue it's an investment.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are allegations that 30 out-of-province workers are coming to Long Harbour without the need to self-isolate.

I ask the minister: Is this true? And what jobs are they doing that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians cannot do this time?

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

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

Certainly, we have an essential-worker policy and we have essential-worker exemptions that are quite clear. They do actually fall into different categories, Mr. Speaker. Some essential workers are required to isolate for 14

days before going on the job site, others can work with appropriate PPE and protection.

I would actually refer the Member opposite to the employer. There are conditions that are strictly attached to rotational workers or workers coming in as essential from outside the province, and that determination is made by the company, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier has said everything is on the table.

I ask the new Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: Will infrastructure be up and sold to private companies or will we leverage those assets to reduce our dependency on properties that are currently being leased?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I think everyone in this House and around the province understands that Newfoundland and Labrador has had some structural problems with its finances for quite some time now. We are working with Dame Moya Greene who is a well respected, well-renown individual, Mr. Speaker, as a change management official. She has been someone that we will take their advice for some big, bold ideas, Mr. Speaker. It is premature to say anything of what that may contain, but I'll certainly say this, I know the people of the province want to ensure that we are financially strong in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Mr. Speaker, the mines in Labrador West are completing some vital rebuilds of equipment but out-of-province companies and workers are being used to do some of the work. We have an abundance of

local, skilled workers that have been laid off from the oil and gas sector.

I ask the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology: Is this the government's plan to get tradespeople back to work in this province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I appreciate the question from the Member opposite. The first thing I would say, lest it be construed in the wrong way, we are not giving up on the oil and gas sector in this province, that I can guarantee you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: That being said, I'm always willing to listen to ideas that the Member has when it comes to industry, especially as it relates to Labrador for which he has a background. When it comes to some of these companies, I know that you've had briefings with the department. If there is ever a question or a concern, I'm willing to take it back to the department and have conversations with these companies to see what exactly is going on and what is the best solution if there is a problem.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, End Homelessness St. John's published a report, an opinion on the detrimental impacts and increased costs the province will face if CERB benefits are counted as income against those who will need to avail of income supports.

This is against a recommendation of the federal government. In his response last week, the minister stated that the department was following federal guidelines— and I quote – very, very carefully.

I ask the minister: What is motivating the decision when the federal minister has recommended against a CERB clawback for income support recipients, and research shows this approach will cost the province more money in the long run?

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

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

There are some elements of the preamble to the hon. Member's question which are not accurate. There is no clawback of federal CERB benefits. What there is, there's an Income Support system in place in Newfoundland and Labrador, and I can report to this House that we have several elements and initiatives within our program which are the model for the country. With that said, there is now currently, amid a global pandemic, a federal income relief program that's in place.

Income support benefits, as has been applied throughout all provinces within Canada, when income replacement is available to those who would otherwise receive income replacement benefits through Income Support, there is a decision that must be taken as to which stream they would take.

There will be no clawback of CERB benefits. A client will either choose to be on the CERB program, or the post-CERB program or on the income support benefits. It is an important distinction.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It sounds like a clawback to me.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend the Janeway foundation had their annual telethon underlining the gaps in our health care system, particularly for our children. During this fundraiser, the Minister of Health, on behalf of the Department of Health, offered to match up to a quarter of a

million dollars in donations from the general public for a new CT scanner.

I ask the minister: Is crowdsourcing the plan to addressing an inadequately funded health care system, and when should we anticipate the GoFundMe campaign to go live and be tabled in this House?

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

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

An interesting way of phrasing the question.

Again, I would love to take this opportunity to thank those over 250,000 thousand individuals and groups who made donations yesterday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAGGIE: The Janeway telethon has been an icon for fundraising in this province and allows people to support what is a provincial jewel.

I would point out to the Member opposite, when he talks about the health care system, that the Janeway and, particularly, its rehabilitation program, is visited by experts from the IWK children's hospital in Halifax to see how to get their program right and get their program better, Mr. Speaker.

The health care system in this province is doing well. It's doing well with less money under the circumstances. They are the rival and the envy of a lot of other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker. The Member opposite misspeaks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to table the report of the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the year ended March 31, 2020. This report presents the annual budgetary contribution and requirement of the Consolidated Revenue Fund and has been prepared by the Comptroller General in accordance with the requirements of the *Financial Administration Act*.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Winsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Private Member's resolution; the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans to move the following private Member's resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the government to bring to the House an amendment to the *House of Assembly Act* for deliberation during the current fall sitting to set a fixed date for the next election in the third week of October 2021, notwithstanding section 3(1) of the act.

That will be seconded by the Member for Ferryland, Mr. Speaker. Notice of motion date: Monday, October 5, 2020.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The private Member's resolution presented by the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans is the one that will be debated on this coming Wednesday.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The maintenance and upkeep of the roadway through the community of Cold Brook is the responsibility of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. Sections of the roadway have been in deplorable condition for the last five years and need repairs and resurfacing.

Children are required to ride school buses twice daily over these roads where sections of the paved road are actually missing. There have been a number of close calls where vehicles have to swerve in order to avoid driving over a section of roadway where the pavement is totally missing. The residents of Cold Brook deserve better.

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 consider repairing, upgrading and maintaining the paved road through the community of Cold Brook in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, this is the third time I've presented this petition so far. This petition has been signed by just about every single resident of Cold Brook. I've talked to the minister and he has indicated they are looking at it, so I just want to ask the minister. This is about a kilometre of road that we're talking about here and the

Department of Transportation and – previously, Works – their officials for many years now, up to five years, have put this on the list to be done. It's a small stretch of pavement, approximately 1 kilometre, yet it's in deplorable condition.

Again, I petition the House to look at getting this done in this fiscal year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, with a response.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member opposite for his petition. As I discussed with the Member opposite, we have over 10,000 kilometres of roads in this province. Our Class 1 roads are our number one priority, and Class 2 and Class 3 and so on down the line.

We will work through these roads in the best way we can and get to them as efficiently as we can. It may be a process where the local depot may have to do some maintenance on these roads, but a complete upgrade of the road – and you're saying it's only a kilometre; we have 10,000 kilometres in this province, Mr. Speaker. So our priority, I have to say, is on the Trans-Canada Highway and the sub-roads that go off from that, our Class 2 roads. We will get to these roads, but I just can't guarantee the exact time. We are looking into it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition or the background of this petition, as follows:

The Public Utilities Board has approved a licence for an ambulance owner to operate in the area of Bay Bulls to Bauline. This area is one of the fastest growing areas of the province. There have been many concerns from residents, municipalities, councils and emergency responders regarding response times.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to support the position of this service provider and ensure the residents of Bay Bulls to Bauline meet national standards for response times.

Mr. Speaker, I presented this petition probably twice before, so this is the third time doing this. Just to get into some of the times and the response times on the ambulance. We have one in Trepassey; we have a couple in Cape Broyle that rotate, I'm going to say. Between Cape Broyle and St. John's there's not another ambulance. We have residents who have waited upwards of two hours, and I think three hours is another case, to wait for an ambulance to show up. This is just too long for people that are in dire need. Life depends on it, so we can't be waiting three hours or two hours to get an ambulance to show up to a resident's house.

We have the volunteer fire departments in the area that can take care of them until they get there, but right now our government has to look at putting a driver ambulance in this area so we can be tended to and make sure the residents are taken care of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: I call Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker.

Motion 1, the Budget Speech.

Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities.

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Inaudible) the Budget Speech. It's always an honour to speak in my new capacity, first of all, as the Minister of Environment, Climate Change

and Municipalities, but also if I'm given time to speak on behalf of the great people of my District of Lewisporte - Twillingate, the people that elected me and had the faith in me to serve them since 2015.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for each and every one of us in this House of Assembly to be elected officials and to serve the great people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, our government is focusing on positive steps towards –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The noise level in the House is a little bit high. I ask Members to lower their speaking. I want to hear what the Member whose been recognized has to say.

Continue.

MR. BENNETT: Thank you for your protection, Sir. I couldn't hear myself there for a little while.

Mr. Speaker, our government is focusing on positive steps forward to our province with regard to environmental protection, addressing climate change and addressing the needs of municipalities. The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities strives to ensure that residents live in safe and sustainable communities and are served by open, effective and accountable local governments.

Our government assists municipalities in meeting their infrastructure needs and help provide the financial administrative tools to support development of community capacity, regional co-operation and sound governance. Mr. Speaker, we work to support environmental protection and enhancement through implementing water resource and pollution prevention regulations and policies and coordination of environmental assessments.

Mr. Speaker, in January 2020, our government announced the ban of retail plastic bags that would come in effect July 1, 2020. To facilitate this, government amended the *Environment Protection Act* in April 2019 and developed necessary regulations to prohibit a retailer from

selling and providing plastic bags to a person. The amendment and regulations were informed by a public consultation process that was held in the previous year and resulted in more than 3,000 submissions to our department. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that as of October 1 of last week our government implemented the province-wide ban and is now only the second province to do so.

Protecting the environment for future generations is a priority of our government. The ban will help protect the environment and improve the waste management system. Over the last year, residents, businesses, governments and organizations have been actively decreasing the amount of plastic waste created by single-use plastic bags and working to put alternatives in place.

No health restrictions have been placed on the use of reusable bags. As we continue to learn and live with COVID-19, the public is encouraged to regularly wash the reusable bags after each use. We are proud that Newfoundland and Labrador is the second province to implement the ban and everyone can make a difference in addressing public plastic waste.

Last week, during the day of the ban, I had the opportunity to visit a locally owned business, Coleman's, to officially launch the ban. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, it was good to see so many patrons going into the store, already with their reusable bags. I did have an opportunity to speak to some of the store workers and also to patrons that were going through. I have to say, by far, everybody was very supportive of government finally putting this ban in place.

I think it will reap benefits to our future. I noticed in an article by MMSB that approximately 120 million plastic, non-reusable bags go into either our landfills or along our oceans and roadways yearly. So that will eliminate the use of these plastic bags. There's a lot more that we need to do in that. Our department will be working to implement more regulations as it relates to the use of plastics and other non-reusable materials.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador continues to implement and build on the Climate Change Action Plan. The five-year plan aims to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions, stimulate clean innovation and growth and build resilience to climate change impacts. We have taken substantive actions on 36 of the 45 action items in the Climate Change Action Plan within its first year.

Actions include fuel switching on public buildings, investing in a fast-charging electric car network across Newfoundland and Labrador, implementing the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund and developing three flood risk maps for vulnerable areas.

Electrification of Newfoundland and Labrador's economy is a key energy priority, as 98 per cent of our province's electricity will come from renewable energy by 2021. Our government has committed to net-zero emissions by 2050 and we share the Government of Canada's goal of environmental protection and reducing carbon emissions. The province is dedicated to collaborating on all aspects of energy supply in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we cherish our land and our waters in this province, and it is our responsibility to safeguard them for future generations. Our government continues to support the development of a green economy and initiatives to move the province forward in an environmentally and economical-safe path forward.

The provincial government has announced six cost-shared programs for energy efficiency and fuel switching in Newfoundland and Labrador. These programs are projected to deliver over 110,000 tons of greenhouse gas emission reductions annually and over 830,000 tons of accumulative greenhouse gas emission reductions by the year 2030, while creating about 650 direct person-years of employment.

In addition, our government continues to implement the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Act* to reduce industrial emissions and set reduction targets. Our government also announced \$1 million and the Government of Canada provide over \$770,000 to purchase and install 14 Level 3 high-speed electric vehicle chargers and 14 Level 2 charges across the province to support the transition to clean energy

in the future and encourage residents to consider buying an electric vehicle.

Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro will build these fast-charging electric vehicle networks across the Trans-Canada Highway, connecting St. John's to Channel-Port aux Basques, including one location at Gros Morne National Park. Construction has begun and will continue over this fall.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro is implementing the infrastructure for the electric vehicle charging station network across the province. The provincial government issued a public tender for these site locations. These sites include: St. John's, Holyrood, Whitbourne, Goobies, Port Blandford, Glovertown, Gander, Bishop's Falls, Deer Lake, Rocky Harbour, Corner Brook, Stephenville and Channel-Port aux Basques.

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities continues to work with the federal government to create jobs in a green economy and reduce the impacts of climate change and carbon emissions. The action plan guides investment in the \$89.4 million federal Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund and the \$300 million for green infrastructure through federal investing in Canada. This past summer, projects were announced under the green infrastructure strength of this program.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to energy efficiency programs for residents and businesses to avail of as we move forward to a greener environment and greener economy. Rebate programs such as those for basement and attic insulation and thermostats remain, have been and will continue to be delivered through Newfoundland Power and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. Funding for the federal-provincial \$89.4 million multi-year Low Carbon Economy Fund has not changed, Mr. Speaker.

Some projects have not proceeded this year because of a variety of factors, including the effect of COVID-19 where communities and organizations may not have been in a position to move forward with some of these projects at this time. The federal government has extended the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund until 2024 due to the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, *Budget 2020* includes \$3.35 million for the Home Energy Savings Program. The program was announced in 2017 and is designed to assist low-income households in making energy efficiency upgrades, including insulation and air sealing to their home through non-repayable grants. Mr. Speaker, this program is delivered and administered through the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

Budget 2020 also includes \$8.8 million for the Home Repair Program, which is administered through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and assists homeowners who are low income that require renovations to their homes to complete structural and related repairs.

Through *Budget 2020*, \$100,000 was announced to focus on combatting climate change through our work with the Harris Centre and other entities for future actions.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government also introduced a \$30 million Residential Construction Rebate program this year. The deadline for complete renovation work under the program was recently extended to June 30, 2021.

Mr. Speaker, a number of those items we've discussed moving forward to reduce and eliminate greenhouse gases. As I mentioned earlier last week, I did attend the Fridays for Future event just a couple of weeks ago, the rally, and I must say to see the energy and the excitement of people gathering to show their support to our government to reducing greenhouse gases. I did extend an invitation to that group to meet with some of their organizers, and I'm proud to say we will be meeting this coming Friday to discuss some of the ideas and share some of the plans that we have in place as a government.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities are also very important to our government. As a result of COVID-19, our government supported Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador's request to the federal government for emergency operational funding for municipalities. In May, we wrote a letter to support the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for their efforts to provide municipalities with much-needed

federal financial supports to deal with the issues arising from the COVID-19 crisis.

The provincial government has a number of provincial programs supporting municipalities directly. In addition to approximately \$29 million in unconditional municipal operating grants and provincial gas tax, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure is now responsible for the provincial Municipal Capital Works program, which invests millions annually in municipal infrastructure, as well as Multi-Year Capital Works programs for larger municipalities. The same staff are administering the Municipal Capital Works and Multi-Year Capital Works programs and related cost-shared programs as before.

We have always had a strong relationship with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and that is most important during these times. Mr. Speaker, myself and the Premier did meet with representatives from Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador a couple of weeks ago and we were quite pleased with the outcome of the meeting and we'll continue with our great working relationship that we've built over the years. As the new minister, I will definitely work to continue that positive relationship.

Mr. Speaker, municipal issues will continue to be a priority. Working together, we will get the results we need for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The new structure will foster a positive working relationship between municipalities and the three ministers.

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities will be working collaboratively with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure as we move forward with these decisions related to municipal infrastructure. I am working with my Cabinet colleagues to ensure coordinated approaches for all programs. Working together with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure helps us to deliver best outcomes for our communities, Mr. Speaker.

Now that I have a few more minutes, I'm going to take a bit of time to talk about a few things that *Budget 2020* has impacted in my District of Lewisporte - Twillingate. First of all, it was great to see that \$400,000 has been allocated in

this year's budget to complete the engineering study on the scope of work that's required for the replacement costs of the Lewisporte wharf and the infrastructure at the wharf.

Mr. Speaker, that's been an item of very importance to the community of Lewisporte, my home community. The wharf has served the people of Lewisporte and area, and throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and Coastal Labrador, for 75 years. Over the years as the services discontinued, whether it be through the railway, then the ferry closure from servicing the Coast of Labrador and just recently the closure of the freight service to Labrador out of Lewisporte, it always had a slow bleed, I guess, on the economics of my community.

Many businesses that relied on this particular freight and ferry service have lost a great deal of revenue over the years. My father, for one, is one of the people that worked on that wharf for over 45 years. It's a big reason why our family settled in Lewisporte and also why we also still live there, as my father and mother raised 15 children in Lewisporte. It's good to see that most of us, 12 of us still live within 15 minutes of the Town of Lewisporte. The wharf has been a valuable part.

Mr. Speaker, I do have to commend the Premier and, first of all, the former minister of transportation and works for his work and assistance in moving this file forward. It has been faced with many challenges over the last 18 months but through their support and their work with the Town of Lewisporte, it's good to see that particularly. The first step is being done. We're doing an engineering study on Lewisporte to see what needs to be done to bring that service back up, and Lewisporte can move back into the marine industry of servicing that they've done for so many years.

Mr. Speaker, in *Budget 2020*, it allocates money through Transportation and Infrastructure for roadwork. In my district right now there's a fair bit of roadwork happening as we speak. Route 340, there's a small section on Junction Road, which connects the Trans-Canada Highway to Lewisporte. Approximately nine kilometres of that was completed last year and this year the remaining three kilometres is also being completed.

Then on Route 340 towards New World Island area, Mr. Speaker, as most people know, Twillingate is in the top destinations in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the conditions of the road – and I hear Member's opposite commonly talk about their road conditions, I gladly welcome them to come down to visit Twillingate and see the condition of the road down there. Some are in very, very poor condition.

It is great to see that work is being done down there now, and more so than just typically what would've happened a number of years ago. Roadwork, they typically come in and just put new asphalt over the existing infrastructure, which asphalt didn't last very long after that. But since we took government in 2015, it's good to see that now it's not just been asphalt on there, they're doing the ditching, doing the brush clearing, replacing culverts and fixing the foundation before they put new asphalt there.

We've got a few more kilometres that is going to be done this year, weather permitting and everything else. The contractors have been on site. So, hopefully, in the very near future a number of those areas that have been neglected over the years will be upgraded.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, tourism is a big part for my district. A couple of Members – I think the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port – referenced last week some of the impacts that their businesses have felt. I think it's common throughout Newfoundland and Labrador that everybody suffered this year because of COVID-19 and all of the travel restrictions. It was great to see when the former department of tourism, culture, industry and innovation implemented the Tourism and Hospitality Support Program, which enabled businesses to avail of either a \$5,000 or \$10,000 grant.

I'm proud to say that most of the businesses in my district did operate this year during COVID. It was great to see so many people, staycationers, travelling to our community. One thing that I think anybody in the tourism industry could say is it really opened up the eyes of residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to see what a great product that we actually have throughout our communities, and it's in every nook and corner of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have great accommodations, great trail systems, restaurants, entertainment and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker. By making the sacrifice this year by some of those businesses that probably didn't do as good as they normally would, I think the benefits will be reaped for years to come.

I have about five seconds left, so on that note, I will say thank you. It's always great to represent the people of the Lewisporte - Twillingate District, and now my new role as Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Again, it's an absolute privilege to be here today to represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful people in the District of Cape St. Francis.

As most people realize, a Budget Speech, we have 20 minutes and we can speak on a variety of things. You can talk on the budget or you can talk on whatever you want. I'm going to go in a whole lot of different routes today.

First of all, I'm going to talk a little bit about my district. I really want to thank the people in my district for their continued support that they have shown me. No matter where I go in my district, I get the opportunity to speak to people all over the place. These days, things are different. We are usually speaking with a mask on or whatever, but just to assure the people out there, because sometimes people don't want to approach you, don't want to ask you questions like they would normally do in normal times, I'm always available. If they want to pick up the phone and call my house or pick up the phone and call my office, I'd gladly speak with anyone in my district.

I'm sure most of the MHAs here in the House of Assembly are along the same lines, because

these are very difficult times that we live in. Sometimes the help or support or just a person to listen to their concerns means a lot to the people. I think that's what we're here for. I'm sure that both sides of the House are on the same mindset that I am.

Reach out to us and make sure that you get your questions answered, because sometimes it can just take a relief off people. These times that we're living in, people are very, very stressed and there are some things, maybe a little bit of advice or something that we can do for people to make their lives a little bit better during these difficult times. I'm sure we all want to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to speak about volunteers. I know that Fire Prevention Week is this week. Yesterday, I was in my yard and I saw all the fire trucks and there were some special people in the thing with different – they had a great parade. The Torbay Volunteer Fire Department organized it and they went through the communities down my way. They had representation from a lot of communities. There was an ambulance there and the RNC were involved in it.

During Fire Prevention Week, I know as an MHA when we're in communities, it's always a time when we had an opportunity to go to the fire stations and address the people, and address the children that are in the area and everybody that's concerned about it.

Again, the times we're in these days, we don't get that opportunity to say thank you, for one thing, that I always like to do whenever I get invited to volunteer fire departments or different agencies like that is say thank you for what they do for us, but it also enlightens – you'll always see a lot of young people there. I know that they're enthused with the fire trucks or whatever.

Volunteer fire departments in my area go out of their way to, not only protect people, but they're very community involved. You'll see it in the Santa Claus parade, for example. In Pouch Cove, I know since I've been elected, they always host breakfast with Santa Claus and stuff like this, so they're very involved in our communities.

Again, it's an opportunity for me just to say thank you to all the volunteer firefighters and all the firefighters, anybody who supplies the service that will make our people more protected and give us that little bit of reassurance that there are people there to protect us. Just a big thank you to all volunteer firefighters and especially this week being Fire Prevention Week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I just want to speak another little bit about the times we find ourselves in. As an MHA, and I'm sure as all MHAs, I really have to thank our assistants in our offices because a lot of times they don't get the praise that they deserve. They're the ones that will get the phone calls with the concerns that people have. In a lot of cases, we're involved, there's no doubt it, but, in a lot of cases, they're the first person that the person gets to speak to.

During these times when people have issues of concern with – some people are concerned about what's going to happen tomorrow. Some people have concerns about their futures. Some people have concerns about how the education – I know when schools first opened we were swamped with calls from people worried about how to get their children back and forth to school and what's going to happen in school and stuff like that.

I just want to make sure that we do thank people that do a lot of work for us here at the House of Assembly. I really think our assistants, and I know most assistants do a great job for us to ensure that people can be relieved from some of the stresses that they have. We know that stress is a very, very important thing in people's lives. The less stress that they have, the healthier they will be also.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to speak a little bit about the budget. In this year's budget, we heard the preambles before the budget that there were going to be no surprises. The budget was – well, if you look at it, the budget usually comes down in March and now the budget's not here until October. So a lot of money was already spent.

We know the importance of ensuring that we have proper equipment for our front-line workers, making sure we have proper equipment for people that are involved in the pandemic that we're into right now. So it was important that those things be addressed, and I'm glad they were addressed. I'm glad there's money put forward for the future, because we did get caught a little bit with our pants down, really, and not having the proper equipment in place.

I think in the future we have to make sure we're doing a better job to make sure that we especially protect our front-line workers. Our front-line workers in hospitals were very fortunate that we didn't see the stresses and the levels of care that were needed in other parts of the country, especially in other parts of the world, but we do know that anything can happen. We always have to make sure we have the proper stuff in place to ensure that people who put their lives on the line for us are protected.

I'm sure both sides of the House are very pleased and thankful we have the health care system that we do have, that people are protected and people – whether you get this virus or not – know there's a reassurance that the people we need to make sure that our loved ones or ourselves are protected are there in place. We also have to make sure they are protected also. It's very important that they have the proper equipment to ensure they can do their job and make sure they can go home to their families and ensure that they are all safe.

I think the biggest thing that I see in this House of Assembly and I see in Newfoundland and Labrador these days, the word safety is the word that everybody is using. We know there are some financial issues in this province right now that are very concerning to people. People are concerned about what's going to happen to the future of our province. We're concerned about what's going to happen to the future of our offshore. We understand that over the last number of years the things that we enjoy in this province have come from our offshore industries. So those are very important to people in the province.

I've been an MHA here now for over 12 years, and from the time I came in here until now, we

have done a lot of great expenditures in this province. I know in my district alone, if you look at some of the expenditures our province has made to make people's lives better: We've built two new schools; we've built recreation areas for our children; we've built the Torbay Bypass Road; we've built a water treatment plant in Pouch Cove. Bauline, we've built a brand new community centre. Everything to make people's lives better.

Right now, we're looking at a financial situation in this province where I'm sure the government Members and I'm sure that Members on both sides of this House are very, very concerned about. We need to be very concerned about those issues because it's the future. I always talk about the future when I get here. I look at my children, my grandchildren and I hope that the work I do in this House of Assembly will make it better for them down the road. I believe that's what we're here for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: We're here to ensure that the people of the province and the people that come behind us have a better life, because that's what the people did before us.

That brings me into my next little thing, our seniors. I know we're doing the supports and things we do with our seniors as best we can, but we have to also understand that seniors are the most vulnerable people right now in society. We don't need to look very far as to look at the news reports since the pandemic came in, since we saw what happens at our long-term care facilities.

I'm watching the Trump thing this week – and I call it the Trump thing – but I listen to how vulnerable seniors are over the age of 65 and 70 years old, and how if one of them gets this virus, then their chance of death is a whole lot more than a younger person. Seniors are concerned about that. Seniors are very concerned about that.

I speak to seniors all the time in my office. If I see them anywhere at all that I can speak to them, keep my social distancing and talk to seniors, I love doing it. It's the most enjoyable thing as becoming an MHA that I find.

I know in government we always offer stuff for our 50-plus clubs and stuff like that. I'm glad to see there is some money going to be invested in the 50-plus clubs in our province. Again, knowing where I come from and my area, I'm very proud of what people do for seniors in Cape St. Francis, whether it's an outing, whether it's a Christmas dinner. Some have dinners in the summertime, some garden parties and stuff like this. All this stuff was cancelled this year.

I ask people of the province to just relate, make a phone call, do what you can to engage our seniors because I know, as most of us go to events, they really enjoy it. These events have all been gone this year. So I think reaching out to our seniors is very, very important. If there's something we can do to make it better for them, we should.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to speak a little bit about tourism in our province. Again, I did it for years. My two holidays of the year are either a fishing trip to Millertown or a moose hunting trip to Millertown, and I have to say they're very enjoyable trips. My stay at home is usually a stay at home anyway, but I have to applaud the people of this province for supporting our tourism industry the best we can.

When I was in government, one of the major things we promoted as a government was our tourism industry and we did a great job. We brought the tourism industry up to over a billion-dollar industry. This year, there are a lot of people who are going to be hurting in the tourism industry and they need our support. I can be corrected, and I'm sure the minister can correct me later, but it is 25,000 jobs in this province that are related to the tourism industry. Again, I ask the people of this province to continue to support our tourism industry. It's a very, very important part of who we are.

Most people this year, I know a lot of my friends and a lot of my constituents did the stay-at-home vacation and I'm sure it was as good a trip as going anywhere else in Canada or going to Florida or wherever. Stay at home; enjoy what we have because we have a beautiful province. I just want to say that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I had a lot of concerns in my district when it came to education this year. I have to applaud our teachers. Today is International Teachers' Day and I think we should give a big round of applause to all our teachers in this province because they do a fantastic job for all our children.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, education is very important, and it was very important that we get our children back in school. Again, dealing with what we're dealing with, education – I know most of the children were waiting to get back to see their friends. They have to understand the times we're in. I'm sure parents, grandparents and guardians all emphasized the importance of social distancing, wearing your mask and ensuring you're safe, but we as parents and grandparents and everyone else, we can only do so much. It's our teachers and the people that are working in our schools that do the job to ensure that our children are safe. Again, I applaud our teachers and I applaud the people that work as administrators and people in the education system. You're doing your best and I want to thank you for what you're doing.

Mr. Speaker, my portfolio that I'm a critic for is Fisheries. I was a little disappointed in the budget that there wasn't more on the fishery in our province because I believe that the fishery is the backbone of our province. I believe that the fishery is the main reason why we are all here. It's what brought us to Newfoundland and Labrador and I believe it's what's going to keep us in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know there are over 15,000 people working in the fishing industry in our province. The fishery of the past is gone. There's a new fishery of the future, and, personally, this year, I had a little involvement in it. I had an opportunity to work with harvesters and just see the nuts and bolts of the fishery. It's a very interesting area of our province. When I look and see what people in our harvesting industry go through and what they do on a daily basis, it sometimes amazes me. It's an industry, they're good at it; they're great at what they do.

We have 400 communities in this province. I said it the other day when I was asking the minister a question, sometimes people look at it and say it's rural Newfoundland, but it's not rural Newfoundland. It's all Newfoundland. Probably one of the harbours that probably brings more produce to the wharf is St. John's. There are a lot of people in the St. John's area that benefit from the fishery and are involved in the fishery. It's all Newfoundland and Labrador that are involved in the fishery.

When you look at the amount of money that the fishery brings in on an annual basis: \$1.4 billion last year. Now, this year, I don't know what it's going to be. The price of crab was down. But it was amazing what happened, actually, with the price of crab this year. The price of crab dropped from about \$5.36 last year and went down to \$3.18 this year. Yet, the markets in the United States, the major markets that we supply crab to, was great. They had a great year in the markets because it's the people that are involved in our fishery, how innovative they can become. Most of the markets that we had were sent to places like cruise ships, bulk for your buffets in the States and stuff like this, but the market this year was changed. It went mostly to the retail market down in the United States where they had to change a lot of packages and stuff like this.

My understanding is that we don't have a lot of crab this year in cold storage and that's going to relate next year to a better price for our harvesters. That's what they need in the province. They all got through.

As far as I understand, the crab is probably one of the biggest we have right now for bringing revenue to our province. This year, harvesters had a great year in my area, and most areas that I talked about the abundance of crab were good.

Mr. Speaker, I talk too much sometimes because I have about five or six other things I'm not going to be able to get to, but I really want to talk a little bit about essential workers and how important essential workers are.

I guess, a lot of us as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we always looked at essential workers as our firefighters, our police force, our medics, our doctors, our nurses and something else, but, I guess, the one thing that this really

brought out to me and brought out to a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is who are essential workers? There are a lot of essential workers.

There are organizations that do things for people. If you look at we all have to eat, and I look at the Dominion workers that are out on the line now, every time I go by them I definitely honk my horn and say thank you for what you've done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Again, we never realized when you go to a supermarket that the person who is serving you, they have to be there because we need the food, our family needs to eat, we need our loved ones to get the care that they need that are in those stores. I just want to say a big thank you to all those guys and girls that served and went to work when it was times when it wasn't safe.

We had times, like the cluster that happened at the funeral home, where there were a lot of cases here in Newfoundland and Labrador and people didn't know if your neighbour had it or you didn't know – but these people went to work and made sure that we got the essential things we needed to live. I just want to say a big thank you to all the essential workers in the province. Thank you so much for what you've done during these times.

I have 10 seconds left, I'd just like to ask all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, do everything you can to stay safe and do the things that are required for everyone else around you to be safe.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to, at this time, sit in our places and talk about our districts because, ultimately, that's the reason why we're all here. We look around the room and there are 40 seats and we all represent our constituents, of course, who elect to have us here to do just that.

I'm very proud of the district that I represent, the strong District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. I'm going to echo, actually, some of the things that my hon. colleague across the way from the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis has said with regard to our essential workers, our volunteer firefighters, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, it is that time of year again, just recently, in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and actually the region of Trinity Conception Placentia, of course, we had a successful telethon again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: That's right.

I was happy to be joined by my colleague and neighbouring MHA from the District of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde to announce \$50,000 on behalf of government and, of course, the Department of Health and Community Services to support the Trinity Conception Placentia Health Foundation. As we know – all of us can agree to this – when we talk to our constituents, whether it's knocking on doors, whether it's in the supermarket, whether it's at the Tim Hortons or you name, wherever, or even at a family get-together, health care is ultimately the first priority on everybody's mind.

We're blessed to have the health care that we receive here in our country, certainly in our beautiful Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. That said, we can always do more, but I tell you, it sure is a good feeling to go and volunteer some time at TCP Health Foundation telethon every year. To bring that money to support this very important cause is amazing. It's a privilege to do and I'm very grateful. Again, keep up the good work. That's put off by Eastlink and the volunteers. Without our volunteers, this would not be possible, and everybody who dedicates their time.

Mr. Speaker, the TCP, of course, covers multiple districts. It's a big region that many people, of course, depend on this. Our nurses and doctors, all of our health care staff, they're essential workers and we thank them; very proud of the good work that they do.

Special thanks to some of the doctors that I went to school with: Dr. Rebecca Powell as well as Dr. Peggy Tuttle. I'm very proud of them. Two very strong women in our health care, locally, from Conception Bay North. They are doing so well and they have brought their education and their skills right home here in Carbonear and the region of Carbonear and at the Carbonear hospital. I'm very proud of them and a big thanks to them.

We are living in unprecedented times. We go places; we have our masks. As Members mentioned and implied, the community events that we're normally used to going to every weekend or every other weekend, they can't happen now. It certainly is taking a toll on all of our community, our seniors, our younger people, everyone. Again, the more we can do to show appreciation – and, again, our essential workers, as the MHA mentioned as well.

When the rest of the world stopped, when we were all ordered to stay home and to stay in our bubble and to stay inside and to isolate, it's these men and women that went to work. They went to work every day in our gas stations, our grocery stores. Again, my heart goes out to them every time I drive by in Bay Roberts to see those striking workers out there. They've been out there a long time, but without them we would've been in pretty rough shape. They are indeed very essential and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

Some good things happening in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. This is the year of the stay home, the staycation. I got a great chance as well to do some travelling to some of the districts across our beautiful province; places I've never been. So it was a first time experience for me and I can't wait to see more, because, geographically, we are larger than the Maritimes right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I think we're very unique, it's safe to say, in the best possible way, with our people, of course, and our beautiful, beautiful scenery. The piece of the globe that we occupy here, we've got a lot to be proud of.

In Port de Grave, I'm very happy to say that over the past several years, we've been able to get some significant funding to the Port De Grave Peninsula Heritage Society. A group of

volunteers that come together to do what they can to enhance the beautiful peninsula. In particular, the Green Point Lighthouse – more than \$2 million over the past couple of years. Myself, as well as my colleague, the MP for Avalon for the federal government, we've been able to come together and announce some pretty significant funding. If anybody is looking for a place to go – Green Point Lighthouse; our locals can enjoy this, I know I enjoy it, and there's a lot of history there. By all means, certainly make your way down.

Myself and the MP, as well as my colleague, the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, made our way out there this summer to announce some more funding for this wonderful group. They're doing great things. We've been able to upgrade the road down there as well, which is becoming very populated with residents on Lighthouse Road. So lots of things to see and do in our beautiful region there.

Also, the Summer Games, as we know, Mr. Speaker, you've often heard me stand here in the House of Assembly and promote the Newfoundland and Labrador Summer Games, hosted by Bay Roberts. We were all gearing up, we were supposed to host this August past, but, as we know, life as we know has changed with regard to this pandemic. The hold button has been pressed, if you will. I've been reassured by the minister a few times that we will get to host those games when this pandemic allows. We're looking at 2022. More than \$300,000 has been awarded by this government to the Town of Bay Roberts, and as well as neighbouring facilities, because it's a team approach.

Bay Roberts is the host town for the first time in our history, I might add. We've never had the opportunity to do this, despite many great applications being submitted year after year by the Town of Bay Roberts and the team out there. I'm happy to say we're making it happen, finally, and I look forward to that.

Again, it was supposed to happen this past August, but we're looking at, if the pandemic allows, 2022. Lots of great facility upgrades are happening. Like I say, significant money has been awarded to the Town of Bay Roberts.

The Bay Arena is a very popular location out there; we have some upgrades and enhancements for that facility. I understand there's more coming through a new program but I'll let the minister announce that one. We're excited for that as well.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, it is a team approach. We're going to be utilizing the baseball field in Upper Island Cove, the neighbouring community. I understand, as well, across the way in Pitcher's Pond, the golf course will be utilize for our summer games.

Again, so much to see and do and it's going to bring so many people, athletes as well as the volunteers from across our province here in Bay Roberts and our surrounding communities.

Let me tell you, I'm very confident in the volunteers and the volunteer base that we have in Conception Bay North and for the organization and the hospitality. I'm going to say, Mr. Speaker, and you heard it here first, I'm going to put it on record, I'm going to say we're going to host the very best games in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador in Bay Roberts when that time comes. I'm very excited about that.

That said, I'm also excited to be appointed as secretariat for the 2025 Canada Games to support the City of St. John's. It will certainly be a new task for me, new experiences and working with a new team, and from what I've gathered from the meetings that we've had, they're a very competent group of people. Namely, I will say, most are women and that's good to see. I certainly look forward to that and, again, I really look forward to finally being able to be able to have these games in the Town of Bay Roberts.

That said as well, I also want to talk about now about the volunteer fire departments in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. We have many. We have one in Harbour Grace, the fire brigade in Harbour Grace, those volunteers. They're volunteers, but I will say, Mr. Speaker, and I will emphasize it, what they do is very professional. The training they receive, the service they provide is second to none. That said, too, I'm also happy that it was this government that brought in the presumptive

cancer care coverage to include volunteer, as well as career firefighters.

I'm happy to say that we were able to reward some funding for the Harbour Grace fire brigade for what was on their wish list; their request to provide a new washer for the department to wash their gear, because you can imagine the toxins that they're exposed to when they go there, when they receive that call of a fire of an emergency. I'm happy to say that has been rewarded. It's on a cost-shared basis of a 70-30 cost share between the Town of Harbour Grace, as well as the provincial government. The provincial government's contribution is more than \$4,000 for that. I know Chief Jim Barnes is – I hope he's listening now because he was certainly happy to get that because that was something big that they needed.

Again, anything that we can do to support these men and women because, ultimately, we all sleep easier at night because of the firefighters we have across Newfoundland and Labrador. They're there to protect us. They're there to answer medical calls as well as emergency calls. They protect our properties and they do everything they can to go above and beyond for our communities and our people, so a heartfelt thank you to them.

I understand it is Fire Prevention Week. There's a theme that my colleague mentioned. We can't say enough about these people because they are, by far, the most courageous volunteers in the world, certainly in my opinion, and I speak for a lot of people, if not everybody in my district the thanks that they certainly get from residents.

That said, moving up now, we have the volunteer firefighter department of Upper Island Cove, which recently received a new truck about a couple of years ago, a fire medical rescue unit. That's wonderful. I will say the minister at the time made a trip to the community and was very supportive of that. That goes a long way.

Also the Spaniard's Bay-Tilton department, a big thanks for those men and women, as well as Bay Roberts volunteer firefighter department there, the Bay Roberts Fire Rescue, they call themselves. There's something unique about them. They're actually a regional location for the refill for the self-contained breathing

apparatus cylinders. They are a station where the other volunteer firefighter departments depend on this service, and that's something they are in need for.

We had a great meeting, the provincial fire commissioner attended a meeting with the town, with me, actually, just a few weeks ago to talk about how important this is and this priority. I've also had some good conversations with the minister about that and he is very supportive. I'm confident that we will be able to find a way forward to make this happen, to grant that very important piece of equipment for them, the apparatus cylinders because anything that we can do to provide them with what they need is amazing and they deserve it. They deserve to be protected as they work.

Also, of course, roads, I would say, Mr. Speaker, the second top priority, I guess, if you talk to residents, aside from health care, is roadwork. I think every MHA, probably with the exception of the metro MHAs, can agree with that. How it is very important for the provincial government, as well as the support that we get from the federal government for the Infrastructure Canada program.

I am happy to say a big priority in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave was made clear to me prior to my time as MHA is Harvey Street. I'm sure some of my colleagues have taken a scenic drive through Harvey Street in Harbour Grace, excursion around the bay as they say. It's even in a Great Big Sea song, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to say that our government, in conjunction with the federal government, as well as the municipal government, could announce the funding for the repair and completion of Harvey Street.

Phase IV was announced last year, Mr. Speaker, for about \$1.3 million from the provincial government. This year, just a couple of weeks ago, myself and my colleague MP Ken McDonald, as well as the town, we gathered in Harbour Grace just a few weeks ago to announce more money, again, for the completion of Phase V for Harvey Street. The provincial portion for that one was about \$1.4 million, whereas the feds came in at just over \$1 million. This was also in conjunction with the

Infrastructure Canada Program, so the municipalities come on board.

About \$3 million was announced in our region just a few weeks ago, and, of course, the Town of Harbour Grace contributed to that one, as well as the Town of Spaniard's Bay, Tilton. They received significant funding for upgrades in the Mint Cove Pond area for wastewater projects as well as road upgrades.

We'd love to have the ability to pave all the roads, Mr. Speaker, but that's simply not the reality. There are many, many roads that certainly need some long-overdue work here in this province. I experienced that myself driving around the province this past summer on my staycations.

I'm very happy to say this work is finally getting done in Harvey Street. It was long overdue, long before my time, as I say, but it's been made a priority to me. I'm happy to say that you take a drive down there now, residents are happy for this delay, because this work is certainly welcomed. I can't emphasize enough how important it is to the people of Harbour Grace, and not just Harbour Grace but the region because it is a main thoroughfare.

Prior to the construction of the Veterans Memorial Highway, this was, indeed, the main thoroughfare to make your excursion around the bay, on Route 70, Conception Bay North, on the Conception Bay Highway. I'm very excited about that, but let's keep it coming. There's a lot more roadwork to be done along Route 70, which connects all of our communities.

Just up the way in Riverhead, we are getting some work done there. There's some major work that needs to happen there in Riverhead, from the Thicket Road down up to Jamie's Way. Again, that's something we're going to keep on the radar. I'm confident and I'm optimistic that we're going to get the work because it is well needed. The traffic volume on this, the statistics are very high.

Just up the road, we're getting work done on the Tilton barrens. Again, it's great to see; long-overdue work that's needed. That's happening now, from the Tilton barrens right on down to Thicket Road on Route 70. It's a major

thoroughfare for this region. Not everybody wants to go up on the highway, Mr. Speaker, as you know. You have people who don't necessarily want to drive that speed. I know I avoid it at nighttime because, as you know, we do have a lot of moose in this province. I've seen a couple up close, without a licence, I might add. That's not how you want to see them on the road. Again, very important roadwork happening along Route 70.

Also, we had some good roadwork happening on Crane's Road in Upper Island Cove, the community as well. Over on Dock Road in Barened, what's known as Otterbury, we have some good roadwork happening there. Again, this is stuff that needed attention long before now, but I'm happy to say it's happening. It certainly is happening now and those residents are very welcoming to see this good work.

That said, we had another great meeting actually with officials in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure with the Town of Bay Roberts just last week. We have more than 18,000 cars that pass along the main strip on Route 70, from, say, the Shoppers Drug Mart area, Mr. Speaker, in Bay Roberts right on down to, say, Jungle Jim's. So we need some well-needed roadwork there.

Again, we had a good productive meeting just last week with the Town of Bay Roberts. It certainly is a number one priority for the town, and not just for the town but it's a catchment area. We have cars come from all over the region to shop because Bay Roberts, indeed, is the hub of Conception Bay North. We simply need the roadwork happening there. I'm certainly committed as the MHA to help making that happen.

Lots of things are happening; I'm not sure if I'll get it all in in this time. Again, I want to give an update now on the long overdue replacement of Coley's Point Primary School. As we know, just recently we were awarded \$16.2 million by the provincial government to finally replace this aging school – it's over 65 years. That said, I want to throw a big bouquet to all the school community, the staff, the parents, the volunteers, because the school community that we experience out there is amazing.

I enjoy the annual Walk to Breakfast, which is that time of year. I'm not sure if they're going to be doing it again this year, but the Walk to Breakfast fundraiser where we get to serve breakfast to the kids. It's so fun. It's one of my favourite things that I do every year in the district. We roll up our sleeves and we serve them waffles and whipped cream. It's a good time. Everybody comes together.

The volunteer firefighters also roll up their sleeves and come and help out. So it's a beautiful community event that we get to do. Thank God for those, because in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave community spirit is second to none. When someone is on hard times or there's an organization that needs funding or support, everybody comes together and supports. I'm just so blessed to be part of it. It's really heartwarming to take all these in.

So that said, \$16.2 million for Coley's Point Primary replacement. We're on track. I've just actually done an update on my social media today of the latest photos that I have received from the department. All the progress that's being made out there. It is the plan to get out there early 2021 for that school. I'm certainly looking forward to that because we are an expanding population in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

This school services children from Port de Grave, Hibbs Cove, Bareneed, Bay Roberts, Coley's Point, Shearstown and Butlerville. Even some children from Clarke's Beach come and attend school at Coley's Point Primary. Kids who are there currently can say my great-grandparents went to school here in this very building. That's a neat fact, but thank God for this new facility that's finally coming.

Also, I want to put an emphasis on supporting local is more important now than ever, as we know what we're experiencing worldwide. It's unprecedented times. It was great to take in a local harvest market that happened a couple of weeks ago in the Town of Bay Roberts where it gave local vendors an opportunity to come out. It was all done perfectly in accordance with the policies and the rules set by Public Health.

The vendors got out there and, of course, residents came out and supported that. There

was some entertainment. I did take the guitar and sang a few songs, Mr. Speaker, to support the event because music just makes everything better. I often say when I'm at community events, how nice would it be if we had some music in the House of Assembly on times; but, obviously, we know that's not going to happen. Well, never say never. You never know, right.

With that said, too, Mr. Speaker, I did acknowledge a very lovely resident today in my Member's statement, a lovely woman by the name of Mary Butler who I mentioned today and to the community who are certainly rallying around right now. She received some pretty bad news, obviously, about the cancer, but this woman, I tell you, is brave. She is courageous; her faith is so strong.

As I mentioned earlier, she's not questioning, she's not angry. This woman is loved by many throughout the Conception Bay North region. It was an absolute pleasure to go and meet her and to sing some songs for her and to be a part of that family for that day as they celebrated Christmas early for Mary. So, Mary Butler and family, if you're listening, God bless you and we support you and, again, just thank you for the beautiful spirit you demonstrate in your faith as well.

That said, Mr. Speaker, lots of things to talk about. It's always a privilege and a pleasure to stand here on behalf – or sit today as we're sitting – of the people of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave District. I thank you again for your continued support. I'll certainly do everything I can to help.

My constituency office number is 786-1372. Please call if I can be of any assistance, and hats off to my constituency assistant, Lisa Brown, we're doing the best we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before I recognize the next speaker, I just want to take up on the Member's comment that we need more music in the House. Although we're under an order now not to sing in the House, it reminded me of when Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor was sworn in.

We had some beautiful music in the House for Members who were here. I would agree, that's maybe something we should think about in the future when it's possible.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll spare everyone in this room, I will not sing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: I usually hum along with music when I think no one is listening, but I do agree. On that note, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting you bring up about the music, but I think it's interesting to realize some sense of normalcy. When you say that we go back in time, and it seems like forever but – well, since March, so we're looking at seven months – we've been living in this COVID world and it would be really nice to get back to some of that regular routine and normal stuff that we took for granted for all of my life and all of most of everyone's life. This pandemic is a new thing and hopefully we'll never deal with this again and we get to the other side sooner than later.

It does give you that sobering thought, and this was not in my prepared – I really have no notes anyway, but this wasn't in my planned notes to speak about. Everywhere you go when you go out in your community and you go into a store, you go into Tim Hortons, everyone is masked up, sanitizer everywhere and everyone is spaced out. There are only two or three tables. Every time I go in, I think – and you see Lexan and Plexiglas separating you from people, it's sobering. We're getting used to it, I guess, or it's a new normal, but you can't help but say and just shake your head: this is different times.

It's truly different times, and the quicker we can get back to some more normalcy and singing – and I know the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave loves singing, and I know she's pretty good at it actually. I do hope she sings, but you'll never ever have to worry about me singing. So I'll clarify that now.

Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to speak in the budget. You can speak about what you like. Like I say, we have a free rein to speak about

our districts; we can speak about issues of concern, issues that bother us. I guess we have freewheel on this budget talk. We always like to mention our districts, and I represent CBS. I represent a large portion of it, and, of course, my colleagues from Topsail - Paradise and Harbour Main, they bookend me.

CBS is a rapidly growing town. It's the largest municipality outside of St. John's. I always like to tell everyone that because that's used as the basis of my arguments when I'm lobbying hard for stuff for the community, but CBS is a unique town. It's probably something that the province – a lot of small municipalities throughout the province should take a closer look at what CBS actually did.

CBS is nine small communities that make up Conception Bay South. If you live in CBS, they will ask you – if you're from CBS you'll say: Where do you live? You say you live in Kelligrews, you live in Foxtrap or you live in Long Pond. So when we're talking to locals, we still live in our individual communities. You live in Seal Cove, you live in Upper Gullies, but outside of CBS, we're CBS.

When we look throughout the province and we look at some of the fiscal challenges the province faces, that's something that – everybody wants to keep their community name and they feel amalgamation is a bad word or regionalization is a bad word. It's not a good word for some people who don't want any change. I get that, but it's something that I think as a society and as a province we need to seriously take a strong look at, because every town, every little community can't have everything they need. Unfortunately, they need to have access to the services but they need to be realistic of where those services are located.

Being from CBS, and here I sit, I'm in the largest municipality in the province outside the City of St. John's. We do not have a health centre like you have over on Major's Path. We do not have a place you can go. We have a private blood clinic. Everything is in at the Health Sciences, St. Clare's; all medical appointments in St. John's.

If you live 30 kilometres away separated by a highway, you're not walking. I have no public

transit; there are no buses. The only thing we can get in there are cabs. So even though you're so close, yet you're so far away. Your shopping, everything is in St. John's. We have minimal up in CBS. We have a minimal base like that, outside your regular basic needs of supermarkets and what have you.

My district, actually, for the most part is still fairly rural. Even though everyone thinks of CBS as this big area – and it is a big area and it's a beautiful area – but it's still rural for the most part. It's been that way forever and it probably will stay that way for a long time, because that is part of the regionalization thing. You have to go to the city to get what you need.

I know my colleague for Harbour Main can attest to it, too. She's further out again. The same thing applies there. They have to go to St. John's or they have to go to another regional area down in Carbonear. I think it's a conversation we need to probably talk more about and embrace as opposed to being afraid to talk about it.

As a province of half a million people, the geographic challenges we face, I think we're always back and forth here in the House and we always have our tos-and-fros and we look for solutions. We're told sometimes you have no solutions, which that's a part of the theatre of this House. In actual fact, there are lots of good solutions on this side and the other side, all sides of this House. That's one topic I think needs to be talked about, but a lot of people are afraid to talk about it because they obviously fall back.

There are Members in this House of Assembly and there are ministers in this House of Assembly who lost their seat because of the word amalgamation. They tried amalgamation; they talked about amalgamation. It's not about amalgamation. It's about keeping your own identity but it's doing the regionalization. No one should ever lose the identity of their communities. That's what we're all about. I would be the first to stand up and go against it.

To that point, like I say, CBS is a great test model for people to look at and consider when they have that debate. I think it's very important to see that they've been very successful at it.

Right now, like I say, it is home to nearly 27,000 people. It's a great community.

There was a time, when I was a child you couldn't get community events. You couldn't get people together because it wasn't in their end of town or their neck of the woods. It was just the way it was. I always felt we lacked community spirit. I have to say in the last 10, 15 years or probably more, CBS has a great community spirit. Every event is full, whether it be Winterfest, the Kelligrews Soiree – who don't know about the Soiree? It's a huge success, huge crowds and there are a lot of family activities from something as simple as a tree lighting event. CBS has a great community spirit.

As recently as this morning, myself and my colleague from Topsail - Paradise attended a community garden event at Manuels River, which is another beautiful facility in my district. If anyone wants to get out and enjoy it, it's beautiful, world renown. They have a community garden at Manuels River and if you're ever out around, you should take it in. It's absolutely beautiful what they've done there. Next year it will be even better. This is the second such one.

What people in our communities – sometimes people who are not from the area – realize is CBS was built on agriculture. It wasn't build on the fishery, forestry or mining and all the typical things you get in most of the province. There are a lot of fishing communities in Newfoundland, of course, but it was built on agriculture and there's still a lot of agriculture.

Where I live, my personal residence now, there's an agriculture road right from the pavement. I'm almost the last house and then it is agriculture, all farmland. With these community gardens, it's something that's keeping in touch with the past. As we move on, no longer am I from Kelligrews and the farming community of Kelligrews, now I'm from Conception Bay South. It's still a farming community but I live in the Kelligrews area in CBS.

I'll leave it at that on the regionalization piece, but it's something very important and we're very proud of our community. There are some of the most beautiful sunsets you will ever see. I'd post

some but there are lots more residents of CBS who post them. I'm sure Madam Speaker will attest to that, too. On the other side of the bay they get beautiful shots as well.

Madam Speaker, when we look at this budget, and I know there were a couple of Members opposite who said you never spoke about the budget, you never asked many questions about the budget, because it was the same budget. There were a few changes, don't get me wrong. There were some changes, but it was the same budget that happened the spring. Last year's budget, it was just carried forward. A lot of it was copy and paste.

There were some things in it, actually, that we proposed in our Blue Book. I know Members opposite didn't agree, but the last time I checked the \$25 a day child care was part of our platform. We were pushing the insulin pumps. That was part of our platform.

Now people laughed when we said – and I think my colleague from Bonavista made reference in his questions, took credit for it, but sometimes credit where credit is due. I think it was a good initiative. It wasn't actually a Tory policy. Affordable child care is not a Liberal policy either. It's more designed probably for an NDP policy. Neither one of these two mainstream parties would ever propose that, but it's moving with the times. It's like your regionalization conversation.

We're glad government took our proposal and implemented it in the budget. I know the Minister of Finance is laughing, but I'm sure she acknowledges that. I appreciate the vote of confidence on that, Madam Speaker.

Twenty minutes is not nearly long enough for me to talk, unfortunately, on certain things. I have notes here and I'm not even going to get nowhere near them.

You look at our oil and gas industry – that's a new role for me, as critic for Industry, Energy and Technology, but I've always been aware. Our oil and gas is the backbone of our province right now. It takes up almost 30 per cent of our GDP; unfortunately, the fishery used to be there. The fishery still has an important role, don't get me wrong, but oil and gas is very important.

We ask questions. I'm in the House and I ask questions. I know the leader asks his questions and the public are asking questions. Where do we go next? What is our future? The actual reality is I think the bigger problem we have outside of everyone in this House here – because I think we all tend to agree because when that oil and gas rally was on the steps, I know I stood up with Members opposite. Actually, ironically, I was stood on the step by myself. All of a sudden, unbeknownst – with the mask on, no one could recognize you – all of the Members opposite came out and stood around me. I didn't think they stood around me because they wanted to be around me. I don't think they realized it was me.

I looked to one side and I saw the Minister of Health and Community Services; I looked to the other side and saw their House Leader. The Premier was next to him. It was kind of a funny moment for a second, because I said they never done this intentionally. I waited it out and the media took their snaps of the new Premier. I get all that. Then I slipped away with my people, but we were all on the same page is my point. We were all on the same page. I get that. We all stood there. We all see the importance of our oil and gas industry and the province's jobs. It is about jobs.

This announcement we made: incentives for exploration. We've been saying that and we have no issue with that announcement. That makes a lot of sense. It does. But the announcement is made and it's made on the premise that this is the solution; this is how we're going to get things; this is a good thing as we move forward. When you peel back the layers, you realize this is not the answer for today; this is the answer for four years' time or five years' time. There might not be anything there in four or five years' time because if these companies do their exploration, there will be no forfeiture.

What are you actually doing? Because it takes a couple of days, I heard an industry analyst that's in the know, and he gave a quick breakdown of it, but that's what he does and he's digging into the details. When you dig in and you start to study this – actually, I was on the highway when it was being announced, and it took me a second. At first glance it was like, yeah, that's pretty

good; that's not a bad thing. When you look at it, it's really an announcement about: maybe, hopefully, if there's any money. I heard today it's probably \$40 million, but that's not going to solve the world's problems. That's not going to solve the 20,000 people that are out of work or possibly out of work and an industry that's on its knees. That's where there's disconnect.

When you look at politics, there are aspects of politics that I love. There are aspects of politics that I don't like. Some of this stuff, this smoke and mirrors stuff, I'll get in the House and I can heckle and I can battle with the best. I enjoy it. There's a bit of sport to it. It comes with the territory and I don't have any problem, I've never, ever apologized for it, but underneath all of that, there comes levels of frustration, because I actually really do care. I'll play the banter in this House back and forth. I can play politics with the best of them. I've been around this game a long time, but underneath all of that, I actually care. I think a lot of people in this House care; I think every one cares.

When we ask a question, we're not asking a question to always be political. We'll do it sometimes, yes, no problem to try and spur on debate, try and agitate one another, that's a bit of goading each other, I say take the bait, but a lot of times we ask questions here because they're serious questions.

The segue for that comment leads me to this. Today, in the House of Assembly, our Opposition House Leader and Health critic, he asked some serious questions. I don't care what stripe you are, what political piece, that means nothing to me. This issue was brought up in our caucus room this morning and, actually, I wasn't even in the caucus, I was told this because I was at the community garden event, but that was a concern of a lot of our Members. If our Members are concerned, that means residents are concerned as well. What happened to that gentleman with COVID?

We never asked the minister for his name, the news reported that. We respect their privacy. It has nothing to do with that; fully respect that, absolutely 100 per cent not an issue, but it's an issue of public concern.

I know our Minister of Finance was at Deer Lake motel when that happened. I was in Deer Lake too – not the same day, but I'd be the first to say I was checking my calendar and I was checking, I was looking around, where was I? I wasn't in the same motel, Minister, but that's the concern we have. I was concerned for the minister's health. Why wouldn't we be? We're all concerned for each other. This politics thing, it's not personal, but asking that question today, I was disappointed, I guess, that it turned into: We were being disingenuous to Dr. Fitzgerald and the minister. I found that bothersome. I'm not calling out anyone, I'm not even going to refer to who said what, but it's about the issue. So when we play politics, we'll play politics and the Government House Leader, me and him have had many, many battles in this House. So when I can play politics, the two of us can.

This is not politics. It's about a very serious issue. It's a very, very serious issue. I'm scared for my family; I'm scared for everyone in this Chamber. I'm scared for every person; I hope they never get it. So when you hear someone dies of it and then you're wondering how they got here. They came from Africa, apparently, or whatever. It's like what's going on here? Have we done everything we were supposed to? That's not a criticism. If we don't ask those questions and get answers – it's a public interest, it's a public concern.

When Dr. Fitzgerald tells you to wear a mask, we'll wear a mask. We're doing what we can to protect people, but if we ask a question, we're asking a question of concern for the general public. There are people out there that have concerns about this. Answer it.

We're not going to gain five points in the polls because you answered a question on that issue. It's not political. No one is going to go out and skewer government for this. Give us an answer.

You're faced with indignation sometimes and it offends me, personally, and that's the part I don't like about politics, I'll be honest, because I thought they were fair questions. My colleague, our Opposition House Leader, it was almost making him feel like he was doing something wrong. That's not what it was about. That's something that government opposite, whoever sits in the chair opposite, sometimes us on this

side, you need to really realize, when these questions are being asked and these issues are being brought up, they're being brought up not always for politics.

I know, and I've spoke before in this House, that the bubble – I suppose everyone gets in a bubble and politicians are bad for it. In the Chamber you can be bad for it, governments are always bad for it, but the outside public, when the public listens to those questions, if they listened to my colleague today; they're interested in answers too.

So just as a remark from one of 40 in this House, I think that it's incumbent upon government to provide the answers. There's no fear that there's going to be damage or beat up for it. People just want answers. We don't have to turn it into politics because these are areas of serious public concern. People are concerned about it. People need answers and they want answers. It's not about us all the time. It's about the greater good of the public, Madam Speaker.

I want to go back to – because there was a part of the oil and gas piece I missed. So we got \$320 million announced, but no one knows where the money is going. There's a task force that's being set up, no one knows what that is. What's it going to solve? We may have to wait several months.

What are we solving? What is this money? Because this comes back to a bigger issue I think that government has when we say, we'll always say we're talking about our federal friends.

My fear is there's a green mentality in Ottawa. Oil and gas is dirty. It's all about the new green initiatives, the green technology. I'm running out of time now, but I cringe when I go down across the border because I'm cheering for Joe Biden, even though I know he's a liberal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Now that's in the US, but I think for the greater good of the country and the world and North America we need a change.

It's all about green technologies. They're not thinking about the oil and gas. You'll never get funding through Ottawa as long as we have that

mentality. Our federal Minister of Natural Resources has struggled mightily to get – someone has their phone on, Madam Speaker. You'll never get money for oil and gas as long as you have a mentality in Ottawa of senior people within the prime minister's Cabinet that are going to be pushing for green initiatives.

Minister O'Regan is going to struggle mightily, but all the while our oil and gas industry could go down by the wayside. I think we all should stand up and fight for our industry, because you can't get green initiatives without being able to fund it. Oil and gas funds things. You can't have all one; you have to find a balance.

If you're going to find a balance, you have to stand up to Ottawa and ask and demand for Ottawa to listen to your concerns, because it's too late when we're talking about a former industry that employed 20,000 people and gave Newfoundland billions of dollars in prosperity. It's too late when we're talking in those tenses, Madam Speaker. We have to do it now; action is needed now. So drop the politics, do what's right and call a spade a spade and do the right thing for the people of the province.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER (P. Parsons): Thank you.

Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

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

This is an historic session of the House of Assembly today. I can see it on CNN tonight: The Member for Conception Bay South is endorsing Joe Biden. I can see it in international news. Madam Speaker, this could put him over the top. So this is well done.

Madam Speaker, it's –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. BYRNE: I have to tell you, there are catcalls coming in suggesting some in this august Chamber may be Trump supporters, but, Madam Speaker, you will not find one in this chair right here today.

Madam Speaker, we're here to talk about the serious subject of the budget and budgetary appropriation and how fiscal policy and budgetary policy can make an impact, a difference in people's lives. Madam Speaker, there is unquestionably value to that perspective, and nowhere would that value become more certain and more clear than the historic and beautiful District of Corner Brook.

Budgetary policy has impacted the lives of the people of Corner Brook in a very positive way. I have to go no further than the hospital in Corner Brook and the construction project which is currently underway there. The hospital in Corner Brook is one of the many projects that holds a special place in the hearts and minds and the lives of the people of Corner Brook.

To put this in perspective, Madam Speaker, the decision to construct the Corner Brook hospital and a contract to do so, with a total value of over \$750 million, was the largest project ever in the history of Corner Brook. The only thing that might have been of a greater magnitude in the entire history of the community, the town or the City of Corner Brook, was the decision in the 1920s to construct the paper mill itself. This is the largest project ever to occur in the history of Corner Brook, only being paralleled by the decision of the paper mill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: Madam Speaker, this is a facility which is larger than just simply rooms or equipment. The new facility will be larger, it will be better equipped and will be appropriate to a 21st-century, modern-day medical system. Liberals fought hard for radiation therapy to be included within their home for cancer patients and it will be there. Amenities will be in place that meet a 21st-century standard.

Those amenities include private rooms for all patients. Quite an incredible feat, when you think that decision came prior to the pandemic, prior to COVID and some of our new

understandings of social distancing and physical distancing and the realities of a health care system in the midst of the epidemiology of infectious disease such as COVID-19. The decision was taken long ago to host entirely private rooms for all patients. Quite incredible foresight in that regard.

Madam Speaker, Corner Brook is growing, not only in its health care facilities with the new long-term care facility, a 145-bed health care facility that meets the standards and requirements of a 21st-century health care system with an aging population, but that facility of 145 beds – 120 of which will be private rooms or rooms for couples, but also 15 restorative care beds and 10 palliative care beds.

In fact, the palliative care beds will include facilities for family members to stay overnight while loved ones are in palliative care, so there never has to be that separation. It's called empathy, and it's empathy coupled with health care. It's making a big, big difference already. We're seeing that facility operate almost basically with incredible satisfaction by both patients, family members and the community at large.

Madam Speaker, Corner Brook is growing an economy and Grenfell campus is part of that economy. It's part of the rich traditions we hold dear in Corner Brook. It has a centre for aging studies, the hybrid model, and the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair was very much a part of that decision making. We find that when we integrate our universities, our colleges with health care, with health care professionals, we get better results. That's happening at home in Corner Brook with our centre for aging studies.

Grenfell Campus is also initiating post-graduate degrees in agriculture. We have a number of degrees. When Grenfell Campus first opened, it was opened as a two-year undergraduate theatre system for the main campus. Today, Grenfell Campus hosts a number of undergraduate and graduate degrees. Well, as of today, as of now, Grenfell is working on the awarding of Ph.D.s in agronomy and in agriculture. It has several masters programs and several masters' students working in the field.

When it comes to post-secondary education, we realize and recognize that post-secondary institutions have incredible capacity to advance not only social objectives but economic objectives and community objectives. One of the objectives our government has is to advance agriculture, Madam Speaker. We have not had a post-secondary institution involved in the technology and techniques of agriculture ever in our history. It was a decision of this government that created the diploma program in agricultural technology co-operative at the College of the North Atlantic in Corner Brook. It's functioning; it's working exceptionally well.

We have a number of students that are emerging from their program that will be our future farmers, as well as better trained incumbent farmers, but we also know that resource is enabling a number of new farmers to want to come forward knowing that they have the supports necessary to make a successful transition into the farm lifestyle and into the farm business.

At the College of the North Atlantic, we've also seen advancements in advanced programming whether it be the Centre of Excellence in thermodynamics and energy studies, which is now a Centre of Excellence for a number of different trades, in particular in the energy field, but we're also building expertise in renewable energies, which are the energies of the future at Corner Brook campus of the College of the North Atlantic.

We have the Workforce Innovation Centre, a province-wide think tank now headquartered in Corner Brook, but serving the entire province and the entire provincial economy through better practices in workforce training and transitions. It's already making a huge difference. Plus, we have entrepreneurship training, joint projects between Grenfell Campus and the College of the North Atlantic through our gateway west programming.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker, we're developing the former Corner Brook Pulp and Paper human resources building, which was an abandoned and derelict building. Structured beautifully, but just run down. That will now become our Centre of Excellence in training for forestry products. It will also house a number of

different initiatives involving research and development in, not only forest products, but agriculture as well. It will become a home for a maker space for entrepreneurs and innovators.

Madam Speaker, the provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is putting in the lion's share of the money, it's well over \$6 million into a \$9 million initiative in Corner Brook through our forest products Centre of Excellence. It is something I am personally very proud of.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker, we see Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, one of our largest private sector employers, thriving. It's got its issues, of course, any newsprint mill operating in a global marketplace of newsprint will have issues that it has to deal with, but it is thriving. I can report to you, Madam Speaker, to inform the House that sales have never been stronger. In fact, there's diversification that goes on, there's demand by especially business tabloids using that characteristically pink-coloured paper, which the *Financial Times* of London use, other newspapers in India are purchasing paper from Corner Brook asking for that specialty product of a special pigment, a special dye to be placed, and that indicates that the orders are long term and secure.

Those long-term orders were made possible, in part, by the investment of a \$12-million crane system, which Corner Brook Pulp and Paper shares as a client. The Corner Brook Port Corporation recently purchased, through support from government, both private and public sector partners in this. That \$12-million project is now allowing for increased logistically capacity for Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, along with other shippers.

The, somewhat, irony of that particular situation, Madam Speaker, is that our product is moving to the East, to the Far East. Normally, what has happened in logical patterns is that sea containers are filled to capacity from Asian manufactures moving to the West and often return empty. We have a situation with cheap backhauls; we are putting paper rolls into those sea containers and shipping them full to the East. This is resulting in a lower cost of production for Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, increased markets and, in fact, this logistical chain is

lowering the cost of paper per ton by up to \$70 Canadian per roll.

Now, paper selling at a market price of, roughly at this point in time, \$450 to \$500 per ton, the reduction of \$70 a ton by one simple action, a better logistical transportation system, is significant for the competitiveness of Corner Brook Pulp and Paper and literally the hundreds of employee that work there. That's something I am extremely proud about, Madam Speaker, because it secures employment, private sector employment, long-term exports for my hometown.

I also note that we are diversifying the economy stronger into tourism as well. Corner Brook has always had a natural and a beautiful site to attract tourists, but, of course, we can always do more. We've relied on the paper mill and we've relied on some of our traditional industries, and are really only just now really seeing the full capacity for tourism.

In a pandemic situation, we may not be able to forecast significant tourism growth in the short term, but we are looking to the medium and to the long term and we are positioning Corner Brook as a real powerhouse, as a real attraction for, not only Atlantic Canadian tourists, Canadian tourists, but North American and international tourists. We're seeing that dividend already there. Some of our core assets, which we share, whether that be Gros Morne National Park, whether it be the historic and beautiful Northern Peninsula or the Southwest Coast of the province, we're working together to not market Corner Brook as a single standalone destination, but as a destination within a synergy or an integrated destination within the entire region. That, I think, is going to build success.

Madam Speaker, there are so many more things that are happening in Corner Brook. Many of them are driven by entrepreneurs. We're seeing new investment in buildings, in capacity in our city, in Newfoundland and Labrador's second city, Corner Brook, whether it be the Hew & Draw on West Street, whether it be the new restaurants, whether it be the new entertainment options that are available through a private theatre, through arts groups providing their product, their cultural industry to each and every one of us, it's making a huge, huge difference.

We also see new opportunities in traditional industries as well, Madam Speaker. As you know, Corner Brook is the headquarters for forestry and agriculture and other core government departments such as Crown Lands and Wildlife. This is important, that investment, that recognition of that headquarters operation was assisted with the construction of a \$15 million new headquarters building built on our very innovative and successful public-private partnership where private sector proponents built the building on a long-term lease. We're saving money. Government is saving money by this new arrangement and, at the same time, getting a state-of-the-art facility to be able to house our professionals there.

As we look at forestry and fisheries and other opportunities that abound in our area, one thing that comes clear to mind is that while cities sometimes don't recognize that they are important and get direct benefit from things such as our forestry and our fishery, Corner Brook does not hold that view. We recognize that fisheries and forestry, mines and energy, all play critical roles to the success of our urban environment and that's why we support it.

On the West Coast of Newfoundland there is a resource which is rebounding which is going to play a fundamental role, a positive role in the future of the entire West Coast economy and that is that of redfish. Madam Speaker, redfish is a resource that has been under moratorium in the Gulf of St. Lawrence for over 25 years. There have been some fishing activity through sentinel fisheries and experimental fisheries, but it has been under commercial moratorium for a significant period of time.

Redfish always played a big role, a positive role in the economy of both plant workers, plants, communities and our fishermen. What we're seeing right now, science is informing us that there is a surge in redfish numbers in the Gulf of St. Lawrence that could estimate the biomass, the spawning stock biomass into the millions and millions of tons.

This government is already working with our entrepreneurs, our fishermen and our plant workers to be ready for when the commercial fishery strikes. It is our expectation that Newfoundland and Labrador will share an

abundance of that resource. I began working with the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans some time ago. My colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, shares in this vision and has been working actively as well. We want to make sure that Newfoundland and Labrador gets its very, very strong share of – its traditional share of that resource so that we can build up that economy.

Redfish is a groundfish, is high volume, somewhat lower value; but when you look at the volume that can be achieved and the additional processing that can be achieved, redfish will play a big role, not only in our traditional communities but as well, very importantly, in our Indigenous communities. The Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation band has already partnered with several proponents in the industry, along with their community's own fishermen, to be able to be active in this. We see this as a big part of our future.

Madam Speaker, there are many things that can grow an economy, but the one thing that can never be underestimated or overstated: confidence is what is essential to growing an economy. The people of Corner Brook have confidence in their future. They're seeing that confidence manifested in the private sector investment which is occurring all over the city. They're seeing that confidence manifested in the partnership between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, businesses and community leaders within Corner Brook and around Corner Brook. We're seeing that confidence by a desire to build recreational infrastructure, which is really a testament to people's views as to whether or not there's a future.

In Corner Brook, the single largest, recreational, infrastructure project in Newfoundland and Labrador has been budgeted for with the reconstruction of the Grenfell Campus community pool. That \$25-million award will not only provide a new aquatic centre, it will provide much needed recreational opportunities for both competitive athlete and family alike. It will also provide daycare services for faculty and staff at Grenfell Campus. This is long overdue and something I very much welcome, because as we support our families, as we support those who are part of the workforce by

recognizing that family care is care for each and every one of us and it's care for our economy. That is something which builds confidence in the future.

So, Madam Speaker, while I reflect on all of the things that have happened in Corner Brook in a short period of time, I reflect on its future with confidence, with great hope, but also knowing that this budget, with its emphasis on health care, on daycare, on protecting the interests of families and particularly caregivers within families, we have not only hope but we have confidence and we have security and stability to continue to grow our economy in a positive direction for many, many years to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

Order, please!

The Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's my pleasure to be able to sit here again for the second time now and speak on the budget. Last year was our first time getting our feet wet, but this year I guess Members are a little more comfortable.

I'd like to start off by thanking the people of the Ferryland District, the beautiful Ferryland District, for voting me in and all the support I got along the way. So I'd certainly like to thank them.

Madam Speaker, some of the subjects I'll touch on will certainly be all included in the budget somewhere along the way. To start off with, I would say when COVID started in March and touching into April, I would have to say a big thanks to Dr. Fitzgerald, Dr. Haggie and former Premier Ball for the job they did during the first few months.

When I was in a group and a group text with a bunch of eight guys and they're saying what a

great job they did for the first couple of months when this started, I'd have to congratulate them. Because it was pretty concerning, everybody was worried. I have to say, I'd have to give them a good praise of thanks for the job they did in the first couple of months. Obviously, there are going to be questions come out of that. We'll be questioning stuff, how it all went down and question it now, as a matter of fact; but, again, I would say thank you to them for sure.

Some of the other issues during COVID was some of the local entertainment that I watched some nights. Residents in my area, from a new guy that I heard, Lee Dunne, was on singing. Sometimes late in the night or in the evenings you'd be sitting down listening for hours. That was the entertainment. You didn't get out anywhere; you couldn't go to a store. You went out once a week to get your groceries if you could do it and you sat down and listened to the local entertainment. On three or four occasions, if they were there, I did make a contribution to them. I certainly appreciate the time they did that every night. Another local entertainer would be Mr. Con O'Brien.

We were there every evening waiting to be entertained and, I'm going to say, it got us through those tough times and hopefully along the way – the sentiment, I just spoke to one our Members here, is that they hear people saying: b'y, that's a dandy mask you got or a good mask. Imagine people talking about masks this day and age. It's unbelievable that we're at this state, and that's where it is. We just have to stay with it until we find a vaccination for it and be able to move on and get back to some regular life, I'm going to say.

I happened to be driving to Deer Lake last week, and we're driving along with another Member for CBS. We were driving along on a cellphone – and this is where I got into the cellphones, I guess, and the coverage. We were driving along and he lost the call. He said b'y, who's the critic for this? And he happened to be the critic. We were making a joke out of it, but we talk about doing schooling, cellphone coverage and trying to get all this to happen. Hopefully, that never happens where we have to take the kids out of school and get them home, because the coverage and the Internet coverage could be scary. We

need to really work on that as a government and get that in place. I know that's a big task.

Every MHA here has some area in their district that doesn't have cellphone coverage or has dead spots, and for people to get home – doing a meeting the other night talking about bandwidth and not being able to stay connected, it could be worrisome if that ever happens. How teachers are going to deal with it if they have to – hopefully, we don't have to go down that road but it's certainly a concern, looking at our cellphone coverage across this Island.

Some of the other calls we got during COVID, one would be dealing with groups, with weddings. I got calls from people who had deposits on music and deposits on halls for hosting weddings. It was a bit concerning during that time and hopefully they persevered and got it done. Some people put it off; some people lost money. So it's concerning.

Again, those are questions – and I look at the Question Period today. As the Member for CBS had said, we're asking questions. We're asking the questions that people want us to ask. That's the reason we're over here, and we're not trying to offend anyone. Sometimes people get up in arms and get their back up but we're asking the questions that people want asked, and that's why we're here. So when people forget that – I know you have a job and it's frustrating for sure, and sometimes there are no answers and you're stickhandling around to give an answer, but we're asking the questions that people want asked. That's why we ask them.

People just have to not get offended. Answer the question if they can and move on, but people get their back up and it's hard to watch. People are asking those questions for a reason. They're asking because their constituents are asking. So we'd like to have an answer. For people to get their back up, that sort of hits you the wrong way sometimes but that's just something that I took out of today. It wasn't something that I planned to speak on but it's a bit frustrating when they don't answer the questions. We have to go back and give an answer that you didn't give. So that's no answer. That's a bit discouraging.

One of the other things, too, we've asked a couple of questions on, and not to be bringing anybody under the gun, but we asked about locked-in pensions and had a couple of answers on it. The only concern I would have is that the people that are asking these questions are in financial trouble and, hopefully, trying to keep their houses or being able to keep things afloat. We're asking that question and, hopefully, somebody can get the answer to that and get some money for these people who are looking. They're not asking for no reason. They're asking because they need it and they're looking to stay afloat and looking to take care of their needs for their kids, schooling, daycare and whatever that may be – car payments.

I know that we don't want them to take it out because that's their lifeline when they retire, but sometimes they got to have it in order to survive now. It's no good later when everything is gone. We got to look at that and keep that in our minds.

I'd like to throw a compliment out to – and probably some of your districts, you've seen this – the Avalon Pond Cleanup that have been going around, the guy going around with the a kayak and cleaning up a kilometre or a kilometre and a half of ponds, along the way collecting glass bottles and cleaning up our environment, I'm going to say. I'll just throw a little bouquet to them. They've done a couple of ponds in our area and there are other districts that they've done. I'm sure that you've seen them on Facebook. They've done a great job with that, so just a little compliment to them for keeping the environment clean or trying to keep it clean.

Tourism: I'm in such a big tourism area, from Mistaken Point to the boat tours – I'm going to say boat tours in a lot of communities. This year in the Bay Bulls area the two tour companies colluded together and they made it survive for one year. The quote that I heard from one of the guys is 95 per cent of the tourists are from outside of the province. Hopefully, we can get this on track next year. They did what they had to do this year to get a few more tourists and take care of the locals and some people that came in the Atlantic bubble to get them out. I think they did a great job. They got to keep their name out there. They can't just stop and not do it. They got to keep their name out there so

people know where they are. I think they did a great job and I would like to congratulate them on that.

Again, I was up to Mistaken Point in Portugal Cove South and they were looking for some storyboards for out on their site and I wasn't allowed to go in the building myself because I wasn't on the tour that day. They were asking for help but I couldn't get in, and she apologized. That's just the situation, the way it is right now with COVID, but the day I was there, it was full for two tours. Good on them to keep it going and good on the government to keep it going. It brings local people in.

When you talk about tourism, when you talk about the fishery right now that was on the go and you talk about bringing people out. Every boat that goes out in the harbour burns gas to get there; they burn gas in their boats to get out there. They're stopping in to restaurants when they're finished. If they're leaving and going back to St. John's, if they're from St. John's and they're dropping off in whatever community it may be. It generates a lot of money in the economy. We have to keep that in mind. It's great to see that happening in the area as well.

I'll touch on rotational workers. I touched on it before, but rotational workers in regard to whatever shift they have, whether it be 14 and seven; 21 and seven; month on, month off, it's essential that we look at them and get them back to having some normal life for those people that are rotational workers. It's just disappointing when you see a video and they can see their dad coming up out of the basement after 14 days. It's not disappointment; it's excitement for the kids, but having to wait 14 days.

I'd just like to see some testing and make it happen quicker. We are in the process of doing that, but we just have to make sure that they get back to a regular life, because they're the ones that have sacrificed, or any essential worker for that matter – nurses, doctors, whatever the case may be. They're called essential for that reason, so I would love to see them get some normalcy back in their life, and they'd love to get it back, I'm sure.

Being from a bay area, I call it, I used to work at a car dealership and I would hear the guys

saying – I'll throw this in there – driving in to town every day, he said, we're soon going to charge you – and that was sort of a topic at that time – to use our bypass roads to get from here into St. John's. I used to joke back and say: B'y, you'd look some good driving your Ski-Doo around your backyard. They couldn't get anywhere. Where are they going to drive their Ski-Doos? We charge them for coming out to use their equipment. Just as a fun part, I'll say it was always good to see them try to keep us locked in. We locked them out, so I said, now, you couldn't let them away with it, you'd have to get at it.

The fishery in our area has been pretty good this year. The crab counts were up. It's really encouraging to see. Prices were down. I have an area in my district that has an unemployment rate in one area that's different. Two fishermen can fish in one boat and one be from one area – and I'm going to use Bay Bulls or Witless Bay – and another guy, they're fishing out of Petty Harbour, when they both get unemployment, one has to get \$28,000 worth of crab and the other guy only has to get \$17,000 because of the unemployment rate in two different areas.

That's a federal problem, but it's something that we should be pushing to address in certain areas. Again, if you included Petty Harbour as an example. If you're in Petty Harbour, you have to get way more money for your catch than somebody from Bay Bulls or further up the coast, because they live so close to St. John's. They are a rural area and they definitely should be looked at.

It is a federal problem but it is here, this is the spot to bring it up for people to fight for this to be able to get that changed and it's something that they should be looking at. They're talking about taking care of the people, then that's taking care of the people – if you can take care of those issues. Two guys in the same boat, one guy has to catch the same amount of crab and get paid less or their unemployment is less because they live in a different area that's 15 minutes away, it just doesn't make a lot of sense, but that's where it is.

In regard to agriculture in my area, we have a few farmers that are in the areas, and just farmers, in general. I know a couple of them,

one happens to be here, but some farmers, in general, if anybody sits back and thinks about it, how they work, if you're in the dairy industry, if you're in the egg industry.

If you're in the dairy industry, Christmas Day those cows still have to be milked. New Year's Day they still have to be milked. They have people to do it, but they work everyday, not half the year and get unemployment, they work everyday. They have gear breaking down; they're welding. They have the biggest kind of gear, \$200,000 or \$300,000 worth of gear to go harvest their product and you hear their machines going in the nighttime. It's unbelievable how hard they work and we have to recognize that somewhere along the way. There's no let-up for those guys. They don't have a day off.

It's honourable to watch, to be truthful, how it all progresses and goes ahead. You go get your vegetables and you go to the farmer's market for a maze. It's just amazing how much they do for your community.

We're talking about vegetables, in our area this year the people are growing their own vegetables, and I know a couple of MHAs are growing their own vegetables. I'm not as successful as most guys, we got some things done, but when you're looking at vegetables – people who started that, they built their own vegetable gardens, whether they go to the hardware stores – hardware stores had a great year and everybody that has a hardware store in the district knows that. They're running out of lumber. It was great for them this year. When it was a hard time, they had a great year. It is good to see somebody benefit and not everybody being down. It's not all negative; some people did really well. You really have to admire those people. We're paying for it now because the price of lumber is gone right through the roof. Everything is doubled and tripled. That's something, again, that's the way it goes, that's supply and demand, I guess.

I'd also like to thank some of the volunteers in my district. We're talking about Fire Prevention Week this week and we have volunteer fire departments. I have one in Trepassey; I have one in Ferryland and I have one in Witless Bay. They do an admirable job, when we're home and

they're getting a call at 1 o'clock in the night and they have to respond to a fire or respond to a car accident, something they signed up to volunteer with, it can be pretty tragic. I'm sure a lot of MHAs here have volunteer firefighters and fire people in their districts. I'd sure like to thank them for everything they do in their districts.

This is International Teachers' Day, so I'd like to recognize the teachers as well. My daughter happens to be a teacher and son in law a teacher, so I'd certainly recognize them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: Hard crowd to deal with.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, a hard crowd to deal with. I'll get blamed for that.

They do a great job. They handle all our kids. If you get in there now, they have young kids that are five and six years old. They're in there and if they have the sniffles they're not allowed back in, they have to deal with parents. So it's a lot of pressure on the teachers. I'm sure they're handling it pretty well.

One issue I'd like to bring up, when we did the schooling and the busing issue – and, of course, the busing issue is big everywhere. Well, not everywhere, I'm going to say in the St. John's area and a few places close to St. John's. I'm sure the rural areas probably have some issues.

We put kids on a school bus in kindergarten and we assign them seats, numbers one to 46. The kid gets on, the bus driver goes back – and this happened. The bus driver goes back and said you're in the wrong seat, you're supposed to be in seat 22. The kid doesn't even know his numbers, and we didn't think about that. He has him on the bus, he doesn't even know what one, two, three, four, five is and you tell him he's sitting in seat 17? He doesn't recognize it. So just a simple thought.

They did a good job, but you overthink everything and – not you, we do – you have to sit back and realize that these are kids, and 17 doesn't mean anything to a kindergartener when he's going in. So just the little, tiny things that

we have to think about and the common people, for sure.

The busing issue, we're still dealing with that. I applaud the minister for handling it the way it's been going. It still has some issues that I'll certainly be after him for, but I'm sure a lot of people have been following this and getting a lot of questions on how they do it. One school is doing it different than the other, but I don't think that's the case. It's just how people interpret it, like anything else.

Again, I made the statement before: We have room for 72. If you take out the two seats behind the driver, room for 66. I don't see any issue with putting a mask on a kid and putting him on the bus and putting on 66 kids. We'll all probably nod our heads and say, yes, that makes a lot of sense, but we still don't see – I know the chief medical officer is responsible. I'd certainly love it if somebody on that side got the ear – I think that could happen. Then your courtesy seating would get right back to normal and your calls would go away. So it's something we definitely should look at for sure.

Another issue with every school is sports in school. We look at sports in school and – I'm trying to touch on so many topics. There are so many to touch on. I apologize before I go any further that if I forget a group, it's not intentional. It's just that you only have 20 minutes.

Just touching back on the school part; outdoor sports can go ahead, soccer, softball right now and whatever other sports are outdoors. We have a basketball and a volleyball community that if you look at all of your schools and how many students are involved and how much of the economy relates to that regarding driving back and forth to tournaments, driving to restaurants and all that stuff that comes into play. You have the gasoline in the vehicles; you have the food industry. Certainly with the way it is now, they're cut in half. So they would like to have every advantage they can to be able to sell their product. I would love to see that as well.

Madam Speaker, in regard to Service NL – and I'm jumping all over the place as I do this stuff. I'm just trying to touch on every topic. Service NL did a great job, but we just can't win. I know

they said they were 95 or 100 per cent online. We can't forget – and somebody spoke on it already – that our seniors during this, they all don't have Internet. They do need to get to these places, and we have to recognize that. It's all right for people who have families that take care of them, but you have some seniors that don't have anybody belonging to them. Who's going to take care of them?

We really have to recognize that and remember them, because they will have trouble. Even if you try to do it for them they will still have trouble. They're just so over the top with it that we need to remember those people as well. I see the minister nodding over there, so I certainly appreciate that. We just have to keep them in our mind because they're under a lot of stress, a lot of pressure. They're just trying to survive and not get COVID. That's the last thing we need them to have, our seniors to get in a suspect area.

During the elections or when the elections come up, or how we're going to do it, that's another big one that I just want to touch on. Again, I'm running out of time. We visit people now that are over 65 or over 75 and before I ever give out a certificate, I like to call the families and say: Is it okay to drop it off? Because they might not be comfortable. Just as an MHA here and you're doing that stuff, you just have to keep that in mind that you touch base with them to make sure they're comfortable with you going there.

Anyway, my time is up, and I thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to speak, especially at budget time when you can make the speech your own and find the words and the themes that you want to get out as an MHA, because at the end of the day it's the people we represent back home that give us this honour to sit here in this House and represent them. We need to be

thinking about them and it's good to have that opportunity.

I'm going to start off on a very sad point. In the last few days we've lost a very popular, very successful, very hardworking entrepreneur. I just wanted to say that his family and friends are in my prayers and my thoughts. It's a very difficult time. It was just a few days ago I was watching him volunteer, working on a project in the community, like so many other businesses over these last six months, seven, eight months who've done that. There he was, and then a few days later we don't have him anymore. I just want to say to the family, my thoughts are with you, and God bless.

I'm going to start with talking a little bit about the state of affairs. I think so much of the theme that all of us are talking about, and we all feel it in this province – I bet we feel it right across the country and probably around the world – is the level of anxiety around this COVID-19 virus. You can feel it in the reactions of people.

I found that back in March when this first started. We were here gathered on the floor and we talked about something's coming very serious. We'd better prepare for how we may have to meet virtually and so on. Not really knowing what was coming. Well, in many ways the unknown is still very much before us. We really don't know what is coming and what we need to do, but I may tell you, Madam Speaker, that we are doing a very good job.

I just put out a little tweet, and some others had seen this graphic earlier today and I was struck by it. You can go on to Twitter or my Facebook site to take a look at it, but today we have within the Atlantic Canadian bubble 13 active cases, and in the rest of Canada alone there are some 16,419 active cases.

As challenging as it is and as much as we'd like to do so much more, I would say relative to the rest of the country and certainly to the rest of the world, we are the envy. We talk about that. Again, as so many of my colleagues on this floor say, this is not a partisan comment. We've all done this. We've all worked together.

I can remember back in March speaking to the previous premier, and I'll commend, I'll give a

compliment, a bouquet to the two Opposition parties because they came together in an all-party, regular daily meeting with the then premier and worked this out. I can't imagine bringing forward a strategy each day that would – critique is one thing, but also politics weighs into it and then the distraction of what's the right way, what's the wrong way. In fact, what we did, as a province, is we came together and we pulled this out with one clear set of messages, and it's important.

On that clear set of messages, I listened to some criticism this morning from the press about my colleague the Minister of Health and Community Services. I just thank a lot of my lucky stars each day I have that guy sitting around me –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TRIMPER: – and the team and the chief medical officer, because as so many people have said, the clarity of the message is so important. It doesn't have to be sophisticated; it just has to be something that everyone can understand. We've been very lucky to have a consistent message and one, frankly, that this entire House has supported.

I wanted to say that. I also wanted to add that relevant to what happened just a few days ago in Happy Valley-Goose Bay with the health care worker, I just – one thing I've been doing in my kitchen, my wife sits at one end of the table and I'm at the other, and for the last several months every day when the COVID-19 update comes in, I grab the calendar off the fridge and I update it. I've been tracking these interesting little events. For example, when the Italian air force plane landed in Goose Bay or when the price of gas went up 30 cents; all those little exciting things that one goes through as an MHA in Lake Melville.

I can also remember the anxiety level when we went into the broader Atlantic bubble. A great deal of concern, a great deal of anxiety and, of course, a great deal of faith had to be put into those same experts, whether it be the minister, the chief medical officer and the teams around them, in terms of what we had to do. Well, we did it and we did it well and, Madam Speaker,

we are doing really well throughout Atlantic Canada and across the country.

In terms of this health care worker, I don't know all the details that went in there. Even as an MHA, it's important not to pry; to allow the employer, allow the staff to work these kinds of things out. What I do know is that there are many committed people, including this person, that while they may have, for whatever reason, visited a couple of stores, I was very proud. Last week, I think it was Wednesday at about 11 o'clock in the morning; I was informed that this had happened and started then to work with my colleagues as to what needed to be done.

It was very, very encouraging to reach out to, for example, the staff at the Co-op, to reach out to the staff at The Bargain Shop and to hear from those representatives, no sense of panic, but, actually, one of strong confidence. They reassured me that they clean their facilities each day. They have other cleaners that are coming in that address the high-contact surfaces on a regular basis throughout the day. People are wearing masks.

These are the kinds of precautions and protocols that we are taking, such that, and I'm pleased to say, and my colleague, the minister, mentioned it a little while ago, the numbers I had, Sir, just for 48 hours were well in excess of 600 people were tested in a 48-hour period. I know there have been more since then, and all negative. The fact that a very professional team pulled together the testing station and were able to process so many people in such a quick period of time, with such a good result, is indicative of the procedures and the precautions and the planning that we're taking are working and are working just fine, thank you.

We're going to have surprises, we're going to have tests and I'm sure we're going to find ways to improve on what happened last week in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. I was very happy when I got off the plane on Friday morning. My routine is to get up early and, despite a late night of Estimates, I got up, I got on the flight, arrived in Goose Bay, went right down to the health centre and there was a very tired, but exhilarated group of people who'd been working for the last few days, and very proud of what they'd been able to accomplish. It was much quieter, but

they were certainly very satisfied on being able to tackle a very serious problem very well, very efficiently.

Staying on the theme of health care and the budget and so on that's going on back in my district. I've heard a few of my colleagues over the last five years speak about mental health care and *Towards Recovery* and what we've all been able to do. It was borne out of an administration and an assembly that preceded myself, the All-Party Committee on Mental Health. The work that came out of that and the implementation and what that's meant. It's meant a lot for my district, it's meant a lot for Labrador.

I've spoken before, I can remember watching and dealing with certain people. When they come to your office, as an MHA, you often wish you had a little bit more preparation. I come from a science background, that's helped me a lot when there have been science-type questions, but when it comes to mental health care, for example, and how to guide and support and provide a good sensible direction for someone who's looking for help, boy, you learn quickly and you need to learn quickly.

One of the ways, certainly in the past, has been to refer them to some form of counselling and so on. For the first couple of years I sat as an MHA, we would refer them to a system that had some, up to and exceeding, 300 people on a wait-list. When you've got people who are looking for help and support with their mental health, they don't want to hear: We can get you an appointment in a month's time.

Being able to implement the system that the good minister did and his team and the folks at Labrador-Grenfell Health, to go from over 300 to zero, folks waiting on a wait-list in a very short period of time, was nothing short of a miracle.

Watching us build on that, we're now bringing in the mobile response team. This is a multi-agency initiative. It's been deployed elsewhere in the province, it's doing very well and we're now bringing that out in Labrador. I think it's going to be very helpful.

I'm looking very grateful toward some time in the next few days, hopefully, before we get

snow solid on the ground, to turning some sod on the new six-bed facility for a mental health wing that will actually be added to our hospital. I believe, this will be the first infrastructure this province has built dedicated to mental health since, I'm thinking, the 1850s. It's very good to see this happen in my backyard and I'm very proud of that.

There are some other interesting applications to this, too. The fact that it's going to be working with the Indigenous health team, both in the planning and the design of the facility, how it's going to look and so on, but also in terms of some of the future operations and how it will be an opportunity to take folks out on to the land. If anyone has ever been, whether you're going in a cabin, whether you're going for a hike, snowmobiling, any kind of pursuit out on the land, out in the country, you know the medicinal benefits that come from that fresh air and the pride that we all have of living in such a great province with such vast open spaces and what that can do for your psyche.

Further on mental health – we use this term and the minister said earlier and I heard this expression just a little while ago, because I sat through Estimates last week – talking about going from the idea of an illness system to a wellness system. I like that a lot, that phrase is sticking with me. I'm finding I'm using it a bit lately because there's so much more that we can do and if 75 per cent of your, sort of the faith that you may deal with in your health state actually you can control yourself, well, why not get out there and pursue, again, those healthy things that we can do.

Further to that, and investments of this government, I'm very proud to see that we are in the final stages, I'm talking final few weeks, perhaps a couple of months before the contractors will be leaving the building and we'll be watching the YMCA move into the new Wellness Centre that will be occupying the town centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

We've invested, as a provincial government, some \$11.7 million, and as one of the final trips of the former premier when he was in town, I had my first look inside. We don't get a lot of look in these pandemic times, but I walked into that facility and I watched some people crying

with me. There were two people there with me that are swim coaches. They're involved in the provincial government and they literally had tears in their eyes to see the facilities that we're going to have in Labrador; that we don't have to fly out to the Aquarena; we don't have to fly to another province to see; that we will actually have a facility of such a calibre and quality as that.

When I think about the fact that there are two pools in there and one is dedicated for folks with disabilities being able to allow them to go in and enjoy and avail of a top-notch, state-of-the-art facility is absolutely exciting. I'm also looking forward to the walking track and the fact that all ages, capabilities in terms of fitness and so on, will be able to be on the same facility at the same. I think is going to be great for our community and great for the province. Again, I can't wait for my next visit. I hope it comes soon.

Looking at my time, and I wanted to space it out a little bit. The Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, I believe she just said that – no, I'm sorry, it was you, Madam Speaker, who said earlier today, you were talking about the two key themes in any constituency are health care and highways. I think of it that way, too. I keep the h's going. I want to talk a little bit about highways because, wow, they can really be a major preoccupation of so many folks.

My colleague the Minister for Labrador Affairs and a few other things, but she is the MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, which is probably the most relevant for the comment I'm going to make. Last night, she posted that the contractor on Route 510 – this is the Trans-Labrador Highway – has now completed some 55 kilometres. We had some frustration that we, as politicians on all sides of this floor, and certainly as constituents, wanting to see work get done. The contracts are allocated and the money has been raised and you just want to get on with it, and you encounter delays is very frustrating.

Nevertheless, we are seeing good progress on that highway. We now have, I believe it's something like 140 kilometres of asphalt now down from Happy Valley-Goose Bay through to Crooks Lake. Now, we have that remaining section of gravel. It's still a big chunk. I believe

it's the vicinity of 135 kilometres to go, but we sure are getting there. I look forward to that.

Another highway theme, going northeast from my district through to North West River and Sheshatshiu is Route 520. This is a highway that for anyone who has been up there lately you will know it's been slowly deteriorating. I talked to some people on the weekend about it who had fathers or people of a generation ago who told me and talked to me about how they built that highway. How the bulldozers kind of cleared one path and then two others came along the side and they just grabbed material and pushed it up creating sort of an artificial esker, and that's what we've been driving along for the last several years. It has held up but flooding and now compaction and other issues and so on, Madam Speaker, we now need to fix this road and we need to fix it well.

My project last year in the 2019 campaign was to say: Okay, 520 is now a priority. So off we went. I happened to get the minister of the day convinced to go for a little drive. He came back shaking his head agreeing with me that this was a highway that needed attention. We got it into the Five-Year Provincial Roads Plan and then working with department officials and so on, and in the challenging times of this spring – wow.

We did get a tender issued for the first phase of it. That was issued. The budget was allocated, out she goes and back came the two bids and they're 100 per cent over budget. A frustrating delay because, ideally, you would just like to be able to show people you're listening to them, and a very tangible way to see that and show that is to see a paving company doing its thing. But when you're 100 per cent over budget, Madam Speaker, you have to stop and pause and rethink.

What I've been doing, what I've been seeing the new minister and his department doing, is checking back on the estimate. The estimate is solid. We do believe that the bids for whatever reason were higher than they needed to be. So what we're doing is preparing – I look forward to seeing it coming out soon. I'm not going to put a deadline on it but I am told that we will be retendering this year, this fall, and looking for a more appropriate bid. Hopefully, we can get a

lower price per unit cost and get a lot more of this highway done in this very first phase of the contract. When a project gets on the Five-Year Roads Plan, it's not like you're just going to dabble at it and then leave. This is going to be done right and we will keep working on it until it's done.

I wanted to take the last couple minutes to talk about a little broader issue, I want to reference it, and I have some colleagues here in the room, but you will have seen in the budget a reference of some \$200,000 towards what's called a North Coast pre-feasibility transportation study. I've been in Labrador now for – I'm on my 34th year of living in my adopted land that I love very much. I've watched the country open up, I've watched the communities gain more and more access, but, Madam Speaker, we still have a long way to go.

I was reminded recently that, as an MHA, I represent the district that's had the most kilometres of pavement applied in the last several years. So while I take some pride in that, I also think it's a reflection of just how much work there is to do. As I look in Labrador, in general, and how we need to connect this province, we need to extend to the North Coast.

I'm fortunate that in my science background, I've had a chance to work on a lot of great projects. One of them is one that I'm very pleased to see our government is now taking some concrete steps towards and that's this pre-feasibility study of this highway to the North Coast.

I'm looking over at my colleague from Torngat Mountains, her and I and others have been involved in this project and some 10 years ago we were flying in a helicopter and doing a lot of work on the ground looking at this route. I'm very interested in showing others that, in fact, getting to the North Coast from Happy Valley-Goose Bay is not an insurmountable project. It's going to take money, it's going to take effort, but it's not insurmountable.

I can actually trace in my mind the route now. I know it very well. Over two years, I was involved in looking at a variety of biophysical features and sensitives, things to avoid, things to consider and the design of the road. We have a

very straightforward project. I look forward to lobbying with all Members who are in support of such a connection, such a Canada nation-building type exercise. Well, this is provincial building, but if we can tag in the North Coast to the rest of the province, this will be, certainly, a big province building.

I look forward to speaking more about that at some point.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, before we adjourn for the afternoon, just a reminder that the Estimates for the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology will be tonight, here in the Chamber at 6 p.m. and the Estimates for the Department of Education will be tomorrow morning at 9 a.m., here in the Chamber.

Madam Speaker, with that, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that we do now adjourn.

MADAM SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

Thank you. Be safe.

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