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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit visitors.

Before we begin this afternoon, in the public gallery I'd like to welcome Eleanor Furey and her son, David. They're here visiting this afternoon for a Member's statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Fogo Island - Cape Freels, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Labrador West and Harbour Main.

The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Speaker.

The Newfoundland Pony Sanctuary on Change Islands is something to be proud of. The ponies are the only surviving native purebred pony breed in North America – a true treasure for the province.

Netta LeDrew and sister, Bernice Watton, are passionate about the preservation of this breed and have done amazing work over the years. Netta began working with the ponies in 2005 and took over the business in 2010 when she realized no one would love the ponies more than her.

Naturally, to care for, feed and nurture the ponies is a significant cost. Netta is always looking for a way to cover the costs and to ensure their comfort, health and as well the continued growth of the breed. In spring to fall, the sanctuary welcomes visitors and charges a nominal fee. This helps with expense costs.

The ponies love the visitors, especially the children, and the children get a great experience that they will remember for a long time.

If you have children or grandchildren and want a new experience, Netta invites you to scenic Change Islands to enjoy the ponies and the Island's beauty.

Congratulations to the sanctuary on the great work they are doing and best wishes in the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Wayne Thomas of Grand Falls-Windsor holds a military background and is a recipient of numerous awards and medals of achievement throughout a lifetime of service: the Canadian Peacekeepers, the UN Medal for service in Cyprus for international peace and security, the Confederation of Canada Medal, the Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal and, most recently the King Charles III's Coronation Medal.

Wayne is a fundraising powerhouse and a community leader having served with the Minor Hockey Association, Senior Hockey Association and Lions Club and Kiwanis Club.

A direct benefit in our community from Wayne's commitment is the Exploit's Valley YMCA and the addition of the YMCA child care centre. During the summer, Wayne is proudly responsible for the Grand Falls-Windsor Community Garden which have 50-plus beds dedicated exclusively to the food bank to help those in need.

Throughout his military career, his 35-year civilian career with Browning Harvey Limited and now even in his retirement, he finds the

time to give back to his community by volunteering with a personal motto of life, Life is best lived in service to others. A motto we can all live by.

Please join me in congratulating and thanking Wayne Thomas for his selfless contributions to our communities and to our country over the past decades.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, Chuck Porter is an outdoor educational YouTuber from Labrador West, known for his deep passion for nature, the wilderness and being outdoors since coming to Labrador West to work for the Wildlife Division a number of years ago.

Through his YouTube channel Chuck shares his experience and expertise, offering viewers an authentic look into the life of an outdoors enthusiast in one of the Canada's most untamed and beautiful landscapes.

His content focuses on outdoor skills, survival techniques and the beauty of exploring the wilderness, all while highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities of living in such a remote region. From building shelters to tracking wildlife, to snowmobiling along Labrador's rugged lakeshores, Chuck's videos provide valuable lessons for both beginner and seasoned adventurers. His down-to-earth, practical approach to outdoor education makes learning accessible and engaging for a wide audience.

Beyond just teaching outdoor life skills, Chuck has also fostered a deep respect for nature, emphasizing conservation and the importance of connecting with the

environment. His channel serves as both an educational resource and an invitation to explore the wild beauty of Labrador and a broader Canadian wilderness.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking Chuck Porter for helping promote exploring in our own natural backyard.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I rise to pay tribute to an extraordinary woman from Harbour Main.

Eleanor Furey is an educator and has spent a lifetime teaching youth throughout the District of Harbour Main and beyond; in fact, Eleanor has been teaching for an incredible 59 years –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – 35 years in the classroom and 24 years in private tutoring.

Originally from Colliers, Eleanor graduated from high school in Conception Harbour and attended Littledale to complete her one-year teaching training and then started teaching while she worked on completing her Bachelor of Education at Memorial University.

Eleanor focused on teaching junior high at several schools until she retired from the classroom in 2001 and then opened her own private tutoring school called The Elf Centre. She's had remarkable success with tutoring in mathematics and reading; for example, in the reading program, she's taught close to 200 children who were struggling in the regular classroom setting. She estimates teaching a total of 500 students during her tutoring career alone.

Eleanor's 59 years as an educator will come to a close when she retires in June just prior to her 80th birthday.

Please join me in thanking Eleanor for her life-long commitment, passion and devotion to the youth in our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

S. REID: Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to talk about the importance our government has placed on promoting and respecting Indigenous cultures.

Through the expression of art, advancements in education and a commitment to reconciliation, we are strengthening relationships with Indigenous peoples.

There is a great way to go. However, we are taking significant steps to improve awareness of the history and culture of Indigenous peoples through such things as online training modules for public employees and reviewing the K-to-12 curriculum to ensure it accurately reflects their experiences and stories.

This past summer, we supported the Our Voices project, with stories, songs, drums and dance performed by Indigenous Women of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In collaboration with Indigenous governments and organizations, we commissioned artwork honouring the history and culture of the Beothuk, which is already on display at Confederation Building.

Tomorrow we will celebrate another unveiling with the Nunatsiavut Government and a similar event scheduled with Miawpukek First Nation this coming Friday, with other unveilings to happen soon.

Promoting and respecting Indigenous cultures is essential to preserving their rich traditions and ensuring their voices are heard. By embracing Indigenous art, history and knowledge, we foster respect, understanding and a more inclusive world where diverse cultures can thrive together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Speaker, I appreciate how the government speaks of promoting Indigenous cultures and fostering Reconciliation. However, the harsh realities faced by the Innu and the Inuit communities in Northern Labrador paint a stark, different picture.

For years, essential services have been neglected. The most recent shocking reminder was Nain's non-functioning morgue that only received servicing after media scrutiny; ATIPP emails showing almost two years of neglect.

Initial shock has worn off of having Inuit and Innu patients not able to access medical testing, proper diagnosis and treatment. Recently, we witnessed people diagnosed and then died within days or months.

Other shocking things that are now considered old news: food priced out of reach of families, fraud and abuse in nutrition North subsidies, all now, all old news. Forgotten but not addressed. Housing described by the Federal Housing

Advocate as abominable, giving her personal nightmares – her words not ours.

This lack of accountability is allowed to continue because of the news cycle.

SPEAKER: The hon. Member's time is expired.

L. EVANS: Old news of (inaudible).

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

The hon. Member's time is up.

L. EVANS: Yet, when certain dates roll around, Orange Shirt Day here – MMIWG fought for the missing and murdered.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. EVANS: Truth and Reconciliation: Where's the Truth without Reconciliation?

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

L. EVANS: Where is the (inaudible) who cannot house their family, find a warm safe (inaudible).

SPEAKER: I ask the Member for Torngat Mountains to please take her seat.

L. EVANS: Remember MM stands for Missing and Murdered.

SPEAKER: Will the Member please take her seat?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

As the father of two Indigenous women and a spouse of one, Truth and Reconciliation is a very personal and hard topic within our family. We are pleased to see the unveiling of these artworks and congratulate the artists involved, but the New Democratic caucus would like to remind everyone that we all have a critical role to play in working towards truth and reconciliation.

I ask that all Members here take the time to educate yourselves and others about Indigenous culture and history, and the history of this province. Also, take the time to foster respect and understanding with Indigenous groups throughout this province and remind us that they are part of this province as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

On February 3, when asked about the response to the US tariffs, the Premier said about the Boston office which is due to cost taxpayers around a million dollars – quote – we're looking to try to accelerate putting someone in that office faster.

I ask the Premier: Is the office now staffed?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I do believe that this is an important trading relationship. It may be stressed right now. It's important, as you've

seen, to have advocacy in front of decision-makers and to continue to try our best to influence the sphere of the president. That's why it's important that we have this office established, whether it's for crab or lumber or other direct commodities that are under attack right now.

We need to be part of that conversation and there will be an announcement. As I understand it, there has been an application that's been advertised, there's been interview processes happening, negotiations have been ongoing with the Canadian representatives including – what's her name?

AN HON. MEMBER: Bernadette Jordan.

A. FUREY: Yes, sorry. I'm stumbling on my words.

That should be announced very soon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I take from that that the answer is no, it's not quite ready yet, still not ready.

Speaker, Chambers of Commerce across the country have written the premiers with suggestions to reduce barriers on internal trade. One recommendation actually focused on reducing red tape in the trucking industry. Of course, we know how important that trucking industry is to Newfoundland and Labrador in terms of the goods and products we get.

I ask the Premier: Will you take this recommendation from business leaders to make it easier and cheaper to bring goods into this province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Not only are we happy to do it, we were the champions of it here, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: We were the ones who were part of the trade table initially before the president made his attack that said that – specifically, the trucker regulations piece made no sense. It made no sense to all Canadians but it especially made no sense to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

This government was happy to lead that discussion and now we're happy that it is on a national stage getting the attention it deserves. So thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for recognizing our initiative.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I have no trouble recognizing initiatives that go to improve the lives of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, not at all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: The question is, when? Of course, it's always the great question, when?

Speaker, speaking of when, 3,000 families in Newfoundland and Labrador are still waiting for access to a home. In October of 2023, the government had 143 vacant units in need of repairs. We've known that it's now grown to over 200. Despite a housing crisis and many, many Liberal announcements the situation is getting worse.

I ask the minister: When can we expect these empty units to be fixed and putting keys in people's hands?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Minister of Housing.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Today is my first day as Acting Minister of Housing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I actually spent my morning speaking with the developer and reading up about the housing issues in Lab West and how Newfoundland and Labrador and our government are helping that.

I'm still getting up to speed. I'd be happy to provide more information to the Member and to this House in the coming days.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I would have preferred an answer that would have given me some hope in giving these 3,000 families that are looking for homes, hope that they actually were going to be moving in to a new home immediately, so we'll wait and see what happens.

On February 24, the minister's department claimed 965 new homes had been built since 2021.

I ask the minister: Can you table the exact locations and occupancy dates of these 965 homes?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Minister of Housing, and Mental Health and Addictions.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and housing, in particular, is very important to me and has been very important to my district in Mount Scio. I know that, as a government, we have our five-point housing plan. Again, I was meeting with the developer this morning. We were talking about what Crown land they could access to build more low-income housing, Mr. Speaker.

So this is something that I know Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is seized with. There are many properties in various states of repair. It's not a simple thing. We have contractors. We have Newfoundland and Labrador Housing individuals working to repair the units to get as many up as possible.

I just want to thank the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing staff for all they do and I look forward to going and meeting with them on Friday.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll ask the minister the question again.

Can the minister table the exact locations and occupancy dates of the 965 homes that the minister's department announced and claimed that had been built since 2021?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Minister of Housing, and Mental Health and Addictions.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Housing is extremely important. I don't have the answer today, right now, Mr. Speaker. About 9:10 this morning, I was sworn in as Acting Minister of Housing. So I'd be happy

to look into that further and report back to the House as soon as possible.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

We'll wait to see that report being tabled on those 965 homes. We all remember a former minister who promised 750 new homes had been built when that number actually turned out to be 11. So you can understand if we would like to see the facts.

Speaker, our caucus continues to hear from 106 Airport Road who report vehicle break-ins, car thefts and even home invasions.

I ask the minister: When will you ensure the safety of this neighbourhood?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Minister of Housing, and Mental Health and Addictions.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

This is an incredibly important issue. I know it's important to a lot of residents in St. John's, as well the individuals who are staying at the property. I know that the police have been engaged. End Homelessness does provide wraparound supports for individuals there and I believe many of the reports publicly have not necessarily been accurate about things that happen.

I know crime prevention across the city and across the province is something that is getting more media attention. Where I live, people try my car doors all the time, almost every evening, Speaker. We do not believe that this facility poses a danger to the area and End Homelessness, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing are working with the RNC

to make sure that this does not pose a continued issue for residents.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I can assure you that the people who write us emails and correspond, and I'm sure the Members opposite have heard the same, they are not making up these stories. These are real occurrences and real fear.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we're also hearing that people are actually selling their homes and moving out of the neighbourhood. They're afraid to let their grandkids play outside; they're scared to go for a walk in their own neighbourhood.

I ask the minister: What do you say to the people of this once peaceful community?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Minister of Housing, and Mental Health and Addictions.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

As MHA for Mount Scio, I have a lot of low-income housing in my district. I'll be honest, Speaker, it is not easy to balance the needs of homeowners with residents who are vulnerable, and not everyone wants to have these types of facilities in their backyard. We do need to help individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador who need help.

The whole point of this facility – and I think they're doing a great job – is to help give people those wraparound supports so that they can move from a facility like this into independent housing and that is the goal, Speaker. End Homelessness and our community partners are working very hard

towards that so that these individuals can live independently and be productive members of society.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we all know why this facility exists. It was the fact that the Liberal government opposite had no housing strategy. So coming out of an emergency, they turn around without going to tender, and lease a hotel for three years, \$21 million to a Liberal friend. It's now costing \$6 million a year to operate. So we're talking \$40 million of taxpayers' money and we still can't get answers as to what's happening in that community.

Speaker, calls to the police are often met with – quote – we can't do anything, or a response days later. We already know what I just said, \$40 million. But how much more are the taxpayers paying for extra RNC patrols, all on overtime, and specialized mobile resources like the Mounted Unit?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

What I do take exception to is the fear mongering that's happening.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: It's shameful, attacking those individuals that have complex needs that we're trying to provide wraparound services for.

The RNC has been engaged, like they are in every community, like the hon. Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands seen earlier this year when we engaged. Those

individuals are doing their job like they always do. When people call, they'll be in their neighbourhood to try to do the services they possibly can to protect those individuals.

Obviously, there are additional resources being placed up there, moving around that area a little bit more because there are more calls from the community. That's what their job is doing, that's what they're going to continue to do, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to correct the minister. It's not fear mongering when you address people's concerns in the people's House of Assembly. People have a right –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: – to live in their homes in a peaceful environment. Everybody has that right. To say that's fear mongering when someone doesn't feel comfortable in their home, it's shameful on the Minister of Justice, Speaker. It's absolutely shameful.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Uncalled for, it's terrible.

Speaker, my office has been contacted by parents desperate to access a developmental pediatrician, a crucial step in diagnosing autism and speech issues. They've been told it will be at least 2½ years before their child is seen.

How is this acceptable?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to take exception to the very long preamble, which is the custom of that Member's handling of questions.

So what we have happening here, Mr. Speaker, is we're trying to muddy the issue of police protection in a community against the needs and wants of the vulnerable community. It is not going to happen on this side of the House. We understand, and many Members on that side of the House understand that as well, individuals need wraparound supports. That includes police services as well.

We're going to continue to do that. That's not something we're going to apologize for police services in communities helping those communities when they need it most.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Galling to accuse people of fear mongering because they have concerns. The Minister of Justice (inaudible).

I'm going to ask the question again, because this is a very important question too. Maybe they'll show some respect and answer this question.

Speaker, my office has been contacted by parents desperate to access a developmental pediatrician, a crucial step in diagnosing autism and speech issues. They've been told it will be at least 2½ years before their child is seen.

How is this acceptable, Minister?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

An important question.

The issue of when a patient, child, referral is seen by a specialist is a discussion between the referring practitioner and the specialist, and they are arranged in order of clinical priority.

The issue that the Member also alludes to is one that we have been working very hard on. And we have in development a child-youth comprehensive care model akin to that used in New Brunswick. It is nearly ready for announcement and we feel that it will help deal with these problems by providing a single source of entry for any youth or child in the province, whether they have a physical, psychological or emotional problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's good to hear there is something in the works because this is terrible.

Speaker, to make matters worse, this child has already spent two years going through the initial doctors' visits and paperwork. The family has done everything right, yet the time keeps slipping by. They fear four or five school years will pass before the child gets the help they need.

Why are we failing the most vulnerable, Minister?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

Obviously, I can't speak to individual circumstances, particularly, if I have no direct knowledge of them. I welcome any correspondents from the Member opposite that I can facilitate.

What I do know from my time in other portfolios is that the school system has moved away from a provision of services based on a diagnosis to a provision of services based on identified need of the child in the school environment. I think that will facilitate matters.

Again, if this is an issue of a referral to a specialist, that is negotiated best between the referring practitioner and the specialist concerned. I would encourage those people to have a chat about it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

The minister and the Premier, and I'm thinking others in his caucus, have to same emails I have. I've responded to emails. This is not news to them. These children cannot get the services until they're diagnosed. Two and a half years is too long for a child zero to seven, and it's really three to seven you're looking at.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: This is the problem. You can talk all these words and what have you the minister is getting on with. The people need help now; they're concerned about their children.

Speaker, another family has kept their child back a year in school waiting for proper assessments. This child has now been separated from their friends because this government has failed miserably to provide critical access to care.

Minister, what do you have to say to those parents?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Several things: I am aware that my staff have been in correspondence with the Member opposite about at least one issue like this.

The second thing is, in actual fact, he is in error when he says that you need a diagnosis to access services. You do not and I refer the Member back to the Autism Action Plan, which was put in place in 2019, which shifted the whole system for both health and, I believe, education, but others can speak better to that, away from relying on a diagnosis and dealing with identified needs of children.

What a parent chooses to do in conjunction with educators, in terms of schooling, is a matter between themselves.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, the minister is misleading the House with that comment.

Parents –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

B. PETTEN: You can oh all you want.

Parents cannot get help for their children until the diagnoses is done by a developmental pediatrician. Ask those parents. There have been articles written, they've done interviews. This is not a new issue, Speaker.

The minister got up and got on with that, what he gets on with all the time and he just

speaks words. It no longer sells in this province. He's the architect of the health care crisis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: He's at it every day in the House since he took over.

Speaker, some parents are paying out of pocket for private assessments and interventions because they can't wait years on the government's wait-list. This government refused to allow private access to a nurse practitioner.

Minister, will you at least reimburse these parents who are doing what the government won't and get help for their children?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

As I said, the issue of priority for referral is a matter between the referring practitioner and the specialist and I would encourage those individuals to talk. We are building a comprehensive child care model and we have a taskforce in place, funding has been identified and we are very nearly ready to begin implementation. This will deal with that problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Some families are paying hundreds of dollars a month for private care at a time when a family's budget is stretched thin. The Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador has made it clear, early intervention is a key to a child's academic success and mental health.

Why doesn't the minister – why don't you support this, you and your government?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Again, I wouldn't speak for my colleague, in a different portfolio, but once again the needs of a child are assessed when they go to early learning and child care facilities, the daycare, the \$10-a-day daycare that we have –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HAGGIE: If the Member doesn't believe me, get up and challenge me. Just wait.

Now then, the issue of child care is there. We have provided 11,000 spaces and the facts of the case are that these children have begun assessments there. They are seen by trained educators, ECEs who are trained and qualified. They are seen in schools. They are seen by family doctors. They are seen by public health nurses. These individuals all have assessment skills and facilities can be made available on the basis of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday the minister tried to hide the fact that he's playing politics with safety by hiding behind the fire commissioner's office. We can put this to bed right now.

Will the minister table the recommendations from the fire commissioner's office with respect to the funding for fire equipment this year?

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

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I hide nothing, especially from the hon. Member across the way.

One of the things we've talked about, and I've said very clearly in this House of Assembly, we've had some \$21 million worth of requests that came in through that program. We have skilled staff in the fire commissioner's office within Justice and Public Safety as well go through that, provide discussion, sit down with us, sit down with staff. Decisions have been made, in consultation with many of the other communities that are there. There are communities that have – I've met with MHAs on the other side, talked about the needs of the communities. Worked through those. They've thanked me in the past. I know they're not going to thank me publicly now, or the department now, but I know they've done it in the past. We do what's best for the communities we can with the limited resources that we have, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Will the minister table the recommendations brought forth by the fire commissioner's office this year?

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

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for the question.

As I've said, the fire commissioner and the staff in the fire commissioner's office, along with the staff in the Department of Justice and Public Safety, have discussions. They go through and evaluate all of these processes, all of these communities and the needs and wants they're looking for.

The hon. Member for Harbour Main received a new pumper last Friday, this past Friday in Avondale, which was announced by a previous government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: Humber - Bay of Islands, the Member across the way got a new truck with a SpaceKap last year, \$129,000 worth of equipment.

The Member for Bonavista –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. DAVIS: – picked up two trucks –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. DAVIS: – that came forward already.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order!

I can't hear the response, you only got five more seconds.

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I can continue.

The hon. Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, I worked with him on a request for one of his communities in Baine Harbour.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has now expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, that was a lot of rhetoric just to say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, the Auditor General recently found that over 1,000, yes 1,000 public servants were overpaid on the Liberal watch, totalling over \$2 million.

How did this happen?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the question.

I can say we have a great deal of respect for the Auditor General. She does incredible work on behalf of the people of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

But let me put this in perspective. That's 0.12 per cent of payroll, 0.12 per cent of payroll. Not acceptable that we have this challenge. Absolutely not acceptable, this challenge. Therefore, the Comptroller General of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is working very diligently to make sure it does not happen again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, we respect the Auditor General as well and we appreciate her finding. But \$2 million is \$2 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, according to the Auditor General, since 2019, the balance of outstanding salary overpayments has more than tripled. Even more shocking is that there was no attempt to collect on them.

Why are the Liberals being lax and not bothering to fix these overpayments?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm sure the Member opposite knows that within our civil service, within our public service, we have some incredibly hard-working public servants. Yes, errors happen. Our goal is not to have this happen ever again but let's put it in perspective.

It's 0.12 per cent. So 0.12 per cent that are errors are being addressed by the Comptroller General and the honourable man within our public service who is looking at ensuring that we have enhanced payroll reviews, that we have involvement of managers in reviewing payroll on an ongoing basis. There is a number of steps and processes in place and our goal is to never have this happen again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

This House passed a new Residential Tenancies Act in 2018 to introduce penalties for landlords and tenants who break the rules. Speaker, it's been six years since the former minister said her department would be taking the lead, yet people are still breaking the rules. The local Tenant & Landlord Support Group has been even issued a missing person's bulletin for the minister, which I am happy to table.

When will the government finally act to protect the people of the province?

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

E. LOVELESS: Yes, I saw that bulletin and I'm sure that the Member opposite maybe had something to do with the missing person bulletin. I would venture to say, probably, his colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor may have had something to do with it as well, Mr. Speaker.

There is a process in place for a tenant and landlords and if there is a dispute, we have put a process in place for that to be heard and that's a legitimate process. So if a tenant had a complaint, that complaint goes through an adjudicator and that's being looked at. That's the fairness there for the landlord and the tenant.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Speaker, I can assure you I had nothing to do with it. You earned that all on your own.

Speaker, with a very low vacancy rate, bad actors are exploiting the system for financial gain. Seniors are being evicted. Landlord tenants are taking advantage of desperate people. Tenants are causing damage and facing no consequences.

When will the minister stop talking about due diligence and start taking real action?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, as the saying goes when he goes low, I'll remain high.

Mr. Speaker, to confirm, there is a process and there's a fair process involved here and a process that's important for not just tenants, but landlords alike. There is a process. If there's a complaint, the complaint can be brought through that process and can be heard and a decision made on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I ask the Minister of Health what is happening to the C-arm fluoroscopy unit at St. Clare's and why has it been missing since December 2024?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

There's a myth going around that this C-arm is missing. It's not. It's still in the room, still working. In two weeks' time, it will be taken out of service and it will be replaced with a brand new one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: While that process takes place, the patients who would've needed the use of that C-arm will be accommodated somewhere else.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Patients depending on the unit for pain management, are left without options. As one patient said, he's not going to be scheduled for another year. He's going to have to wait a year before he gets his treatment.

Has this been communicated to the doctors then, and to the patients who depend on this unit? Because it seems to be brand new news to them, who are depending on this.

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

J. HAGGIE: Certainly the Member opposite makes an interesting point about communications. I'll be happy to look into that.

The understanding that I have from the director concerned is that there will be no disruption to patient services and that the machine is simply being replaced because it's old and worn out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

From what I understand, patients have already had their treatments delayed.

Speaker, parents seeking developmental assessment and services for their children are facing excessively long wait times. Last March, the pediatric unit in Central Newfoundland told schools not to send schools for assessment due to the backlog. Such delays have a direct impact on student engagement and success. The minister says there's funding and there's a plan in place.

So when can we expect then these wait times to reduce and these backlogs eliminated?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's an important issue that I'm pleased to have the chance to address here in the House. When we're talking about students who require specific supports in our classrooms, they don't require a diagnosis before those supports are in place. We have a host of professionals who are able to

assess these children and identify the needs that they have without placing a label or identifying a diagnosis on this child.

We provide supports based on the needs in place in the classrooms, and these can be identified by, as the Minister of Health had said earlier, our early childhood educators, by our support staff in our classrooms, by speech language pathologists. Any of the individuals who are involved in the circle of care or the education system can identify the needs of these children and then the Department of Education is responsive in placing supports in the classroom for them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

A former provincial Liberal leader and current MP said today that people in this province have yet to see the benefits from the \$300 million transferred from Ottawa to the health care system here in this province.

Meanwhile, NL Health Services is contracting out diagnostic services in Lab-Grenfell, we're still relying on private agency nurses and Lab West is still waiting on our government to recruit physicians and other health care workers. More and more and more Labradorians are having to travel to the Island for stuff that used to be taken care of in Labrador.

I ask the minister: Why have we yet to see any improvement in access in the last four years and where did the \$300 million go?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

There is no doubt we have made significant investments in health care over the last

couple of years. I think the last budget was \$4.1 billion, which is a significant increase year over year. In terms of access and wait times, we have now registered 73,000 individuals with a Family Care Team. That is up from 32,000 probably just about a year ago.

We have recruited over 1,133 nurses; in there are nurse practitioners. The vacancy rate in the health care system has gone down. We are now down to 8 per cent vacancy in nurse practitioners and we continue year on year to hire more than we lose through attrition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Speaker, more and more Labradorians are finding less and less access to health care over the last four years. More and more Labradorians are waiting in emerge for services that normally were provided by now gone primary care physicians. More and more Labradorians have to go to St. John's for care that is normally provided in Labrador.

In the last three years, where did that \$300 million go and why are more and more Labradorians having no access to health care?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

It gives me an opportunity to talk about virtual care which has filled a significant gap and provided primary care for a significant number of people since we use it.

It also allows me to set the record straight that the Teladoc contract is with Teladoc Health, Canada, which is an entirely Canadian company and uses Canadian

licensed doctors as well as Newfoundland and Labrador licensed doctors. And because of some misinformation that was put out there, their actual international headquarters is Spain. They have nothing to do with the United States.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to stand on a point of order, section 49.

In Question Period when the Member for Conception Bay South was asking questions of the Health Minister, he accused the Health Minister of misleading the House. It's unparliamentary and I would like to ask the hon. Opposition House Leader to withdraw the statement.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Well, he was misleading the House, but I will withdraw that comment, because I'm not allowed to say it in here. But if you want to bring me up in front of the microphone, I'll tell the province that he was misleading the House once again.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The language is unparliamentary; I will ask the Member to retract his comments.

B. PETTEN: No problem, Mr. Speaker, I will retract that comment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: (Inaudible) 49.

During debate today, the hon. Member for Virginia Waters accused the Member for CBS of fear mongering. It is unparliamentary; I'd like for him to retract his statement.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

That phrase –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: No, no, misleading was clearly – it was directed towards a Member.

There's no point of order.

Any presenting reports by Standing and Select Committees?

Tabling of Documents?

Tabling of Documents

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries – Digital Government and Service NL.

E. LOVELESS: Not now.

SPEAKER: Old portfolio.

E. LOVELESS: Speaker, in accordance with section 10 of the *Architects Act, 2008*, I hereby table the 2024 annual report of the Architects Licensing Board of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much on this occasion.

I rise to respond to a question from the hon. Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

The answer in Question Period to the question he posed about the number of land use planning applications in the department currently is four.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, point of order, point of clarity, section 49, whatever you want me to apply to, I think it's important to distinguish here. You've made a ruling when my colleague for Terra Nova and Deputy Opposition House Leader said about fear mongering. So are you telling the House of Assembly, as Speaker, that fear mongering is fine – misleading is not, but fear mongering is fine?

So it is all right for us to be using fear mongering in the House freely and at our own will? Is that acceptable? Because I do question that, Speaker. We can call me challenging or whatever you want, I want you to rule on fear mongering. Is that

parliamentary or unparliamentary? I think it's a fair question and it deserves an honest answer.

SPEAKER: I will take the Member's point of order under advisement and report back to the House, but I did make a ruling on the other one. It wasn't directed at a particular Member; it was directed as a whole.

Any further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The residents of the Local Service District of Gander Bay South are concerned with the road condition of River Loop Crescent. This gravel road is in constant need of upgrading, plowing and levelling to ensure the road is safe to travel for its residents. The road is used by school buses and it is the road to the great Gander River, famous for its salmon. Many anglers from across the province and the world travel this road.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure the paving of River Loop Crescent so residents, schoolchildren and visitors have safe passage and peace of mind while travelling this roadway.

Speaker, I brought this up in the House last fall about that road there. Nothing has been done about the situation. I'm getting constant calls from the district on it. It's a dangerous situation. In the winter, that road is slanted and the school bus has to make a run for the hill and there has been a few close calls in that area there.

Therefore, I did request this year in the budget that they consider upgrading and paving that section of road.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

WHEREAS Route 60 through Topsail is a heavily populated area with physically active residents; and

WHEREAS residents and young children who walk daily to school are finding it very unsafe with the deplorable state of erosion along the shoulders of Route 60 through Topsail;

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 find a more permanent solution and install curb and gutter in areas affected by erosion.

I've tabled this petition many times. I think I'm on the fifth Minister of Infrastructure. Some in the past have indicated they would act on it as soon as possible. Others I've submitted letters and supports and pictures and what have you when requested and, to this day, there's been nothing done. I do understand that the town and government have been working together but that does not take away the fact that the road, currently, is still in a deplorable state and it is still the responsibility of the provincial government to look at that.

A study that was completed by the Town of CBS by the Harbourside Transportation Consultants in 2020 indicates that the flowthrough on that road, back in 2020, where about 6,500 vehicles per day and during rush hours and that, main hours, it

was peaking at about 650 and 1,350 vehicles per hour. So this is a heavily travelled area with traffic and I suspect it's closer to 10,000 now a day.

Along that route, many kids, many children are on the shoulders of that road or what remains of shoulders waiting for buses. It's an extremely dangerous situation for many. There's nowhere for seniors to walk, and I've mentioned this before. We've had one senior, in the past, who broke an ankle walking on this section. This is not a big section of road but it is very much eroded and highly travelled. I call on government, once again, to do something to permanently fix this and do it as soon as possible.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Whereas in the District of Harbour Main, there are many residents who are concerned with the deteriorating cell phone service that they have been experiencing in recent months. There has been a significant decline in the cell service throughout the district where calls are being dropped and residents are unable to get their calls to go through for no apparent reason.

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 work and partner with the various cellular providers and telecommunication officials to stabilize and improve the cell phone service within the region so that citizens have a reliable service that they can depend on.

Speaker, I've raised this petition in the House on numerous occasions over the last five years. The cell phone service in the District of Harbour Main is only getting worse. As I stated, dropped calls, terrible or no service and it clearly is declining. There is clearly no improvement and there's clearly no progress.

Speaker, even the Auditor General of Canada in the report in the House of Commons in 2023, said Newfoundland and Labrador has the worst cellphone service in Canada. Not only that the worst rural cellular connectivity in the country. What does this mean? This means without access to fast, reliable and affordable cellular services rural Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not having the same opportunities as people who are residing in urban areas. This is not acceptable.

The government has an important responsibility. We've heard the minister say and we understand it's federally regulated, but we also understand that the province has some responsibility and time after time, petition after petition, the minister gets up and really does not provide any evidence of progress. He basically says he's open to suggestions, but we need the minister to act. We need to see progress. We need to understand exactly what this government is doing to improve the cellphone service, not only in the District of Harbour Main, but also in the entire province.

We know that our constituents are concerned about it. We also know that safety is an issue as well. Staying connected with family members is so important. Many people have even gotten rid of landlines and rely on this service 100 per cent. Cellphone plans are extremely expensive, yet I would argue that this government is letting these companies sell a service to the people that they are not receiving. That is not acceptable, and we need to see progress on this important matter.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology for a response.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I wasn't going to comment but I thought about a couple of points and certainly the Member makes some very valid points in the petition. The fact is that there are absolutely pockets without coverage in that district and many districts. That's something that none of us find acceptable in this day and age.

What I can say, is that we are continuing to work on this. Now I will disagree with the Member about us letting the companies sell it, I mean, that's not a real argument there. I'm not sure how that exactly works. The reality is that if people don't want to buy it, they can choose not to buy it. But I want to get back to the main point, the main point being that the Member is right, we're going to continue to work on it.

But what I will say is that there are things under way. I wish I could give the timeline here but hopefully at some juncture I will be able stand up and show the Member opposite that we have made some progress, because it's not like we don't share the same concern. I think you will you see things happening this year.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, these are the reasons for this petition: In early January coastal communities around the Island suffered

damage due to storm surges. Around January 8, the Spotted Island community wharf was destroyed in a storm surge. On January 10 to 16, residents of the area noticed debris, including the Spotted Island wharf and oil and gas cans, were washing up in the surrounding area.

On January 30, 2025, Justice and Public Safety announced compensation for communities damaged by the storm surge earlier in the month under the Newfoundland and Labrador Disaster Financial Assistance Program. Spotted Island was excluded from that program, but they needed government's help as they are unable to conduct the cleanup of this scale on their own.

Community members are concerned about the effect the debris and contamination will have on migratory birds and marine wildlife.

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 immediately expedite the cleanup of contaminated sites on Spotted Island to protect the marine life, ecosystem, land and resources in that area. To immediately do so before the spring thaw, to mitigate any further damages and ensuring thorough consultation with the Spotted Island committee.

Speaker, residents have said that with boats out of the water this time of the year the people of Spotted Island cannot do this alone, and they need government help and action now.

If they could access the area at this time, they would, but they cannot and that's another impediment. Residents are pleading for some respect for the land, the water, the sea, the ice and marine life and birds and they're hoping that the Canadian Coast Guard can be contacted for immediate assistance with this cleanup.

To complete this cleanup at this time of the year and to make this happen, Spotted Island residents require assistance. They've included an inventory of definitive environmental hazards present in the area. Thirty 50-fathom gillnets, 20 15-fathom trout nets, 20 205-litre drums, some with fuel and gas and 50 20-litre drums, some that had fuel and gas.

Very clearly they feel that both the provincial and federal governments are not concerned about the environment and marine life in the area so I call upon the government to address this issue. There are some photographs of the damage, and it seems pretty significant but certainly something that's manageable by government.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader for a response.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

The Member has petitioned on a topic that is in my backyard, that I'm very, very familiar with. Spotted people who winter in Cartwright, they're a very, very proud people, proud of where they come from and it was really an upsetting day when the storm surge washed out, I'm going to say, maybe a 10-room stage. I've been there many times. They recently celebrated Come Home Year in Spotted and so when that was swept out to sea there are two things.

It's a big loss to the community, to their history but also, of concern, as the Member outlined, we were concerned about things in the water, things floating that would impact, you know, the fish and their habitat et cetera. I've sat down and I met with the guy that would say is in charge of that in his home community of Cartwright. I did a call to *Open Line*. I was asked about it recently. There's always, I guess, a little bit of back-and-forth between jurisdictions.

Generally, if it's in the water, that is under DFO but I did propose two solutions to the member in Cartwright to bring forward to us, working with Justice and Public Safety, and we'll continue to work with them to find some resolution as the Member already mentioned. The challenge, right now, is it's an area that is not safe for anyone to get to. In terms of Coast Guard, which is under the federal government. The Coast Guard, right now, is giving a lot of time to the ferry which is keeping the flow of goods and services moving across the Strait of Belle Isle.

I would encourage them to work with the federal government on that matter. We'll do what we can to support the people of Spotted with this challenge.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition urges our leaders to ensure residents in our six Indigenous communities of Northern Labrador are provided with the access to timely and adequate mental health care. Northern Labrador communities have long suffered the harmful impacts of government policies that have resulted in intergenerational trauma.

The lack of mental health supports to Northern Labrador residents are impacting the people's ability to effectively deal with their trauma, resulting in new cycles of trauma.

We witness the highest rates of suicide compared to other regions of Newfoundland and Labrador. Survivors of suicide often suffer serious adverse mental health impacts.

We witness deteriorating physical wellness such as diabetes and heart disease in many survivors of unresolved trauma. We witness increased children in care in our

communities and often are tied to unresolved intergenerational trauma.

Speaker, I present two petitions: one on access to health care and one to access for mental health care. Speaker, both of those things are related. When you don't resolve problems, such as access to housing, safe housing, warm housing, access to food, access to supports for elders, for children, for women, for people with illness and injury, a lot of times that causes serious mental health issues. Also, survivors who have experienced loss through suicide have serious, serious mental health issues that needs to be supported.

In order to break the cycle, we need action. Speaker, I'm reminded of back in the day, growing up, there used to be a little figurine of three monkeys and it said: See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.

Now, Speaker, we can't have government closing their eyes so you don't hear the issues and the harm; you can't have government closing your ears so you don't hear the pleas from the people who are experiencing harm; you can't speak nothing so the issue dies a silent death because it's being ignored.

Speaker, I spoke before about the news cycle, when issues are brought forward, people are upset and can't believe this is happening in my district. But, unfortunately, nothing gets done and I continue to raise it and what happens is, it's no longer news, therefore, it allows the government not to deal with the issues, Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills for a response.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

As Acting Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, I'd be happy to meet with the Member to discuss further. I understand the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions have nearly completed their report. I haven't seen a draft yet. I look forward to reviewing that and I'd be very happy to learn more about this from the Member. They obviously know a lot more about than I do and I have a lot to learn, so I'd be happy to learn from the Member.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Long Run is the main access road from the Goulds to Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove. This piece of infrastructure is in need of major repairs. This road is in deplorable condition and relied upon by both residents and visitors on a daily basis. Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove is a well-known tourist attraction in the area.

THEREFORE, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to complete necessary repairs to the Long Run Road in Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove to enhance and improve the flow of traffic to allow safer travel on this important roadway.

Speaker, I've certainly mentioned this many times since I've been in the House of Assembly and doing petitions on what's called the Long Run Road down in Petty Harbour. Over the last few years, I've had three different ministers and the letter that the town had wrote me back in 2024, I've had the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island who is the current minister, the Member for St. John's - Quidi Vidi and the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune when this was first sent. So we've had three

ministers that have been dealing with this issue.

In their letter it says: It's gotten to the point that more is needed than simply filling potholes. We haven't even seen the potholes repaired properly over the last number of years. The town was advised in conversation with an employee a few years back that a major asphalt project would take place on this roadway. To date, there has been nothing done or has not been completed.

Now, they are going down patching the roads. If you go down there, you drive though it, the tourists that go down there in the summer – I said this many times in this, you're probably tired of listening to it – there's thousands of tourists that go through the area – thousands. They got all kinds of restaurants down there. They got ziplines down there. They got an aquarium down there.

It's a great fishing community if you're looking for rural Newfoundland to go out, and the road is not fit to drive on to go down through the community. From Crocker's Bridge down to where Chafe's Landing is, it's not fit. It should be repaired. I've had numbers of calls over the last few years to get this fixed.

They call a lot of times, three or four times a year I'm getting calls; certainly, this time of the year it's more frequent. Hopefully, the minister will see it in his wisdom to get down and repair this road once and for all so that the tourists can drive down there and the residents can drive freely without destruction to their vehicles.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 8, Bill 108, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 108, the Revenue Administration Act No. 8, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 8," carried. (Bill 108)

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 8. (Bill 108)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 108 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Provincial Health Authority Act, Bill 109, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 109, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Provincial Health Authority Act," carried. (Bill 109)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Provincial Health Authority Act. (Bill 109)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 108 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to continue progress on Bill 105.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of Supply to debate Bill 105.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 105, An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

Resolution

"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened as follows:

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2026 the sum of \$3,949,634,900."

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate it and I thank my hon. colleague for the leave to go first.

We're discussing Bill 105, as different from the long title, I guess, we're talking about Interim Supply and making sure that we can pay the bills prior to any budgetary process. Make sure that we're paying our teachers, our police, our firefighters, our public service that I know that everybody on this side of the House is very proud of and honoured to work on their behalf as well to make sure that the public is well taken care of.

When we look at Interim Supply and we talk about the monies being spent, you know, the government side, I guess, is the one who prepares it, and they talk about their fiscal prudence and stuff like that. There are a few things that I'd like to touch on that are not necessarily fiscally prudent that I would like to see a difference.

One thing I will say though, the Minister of Education spoke the other day, quite eloquently about how well the 1.6-kilometre busing rule is working. I think, that was no small feat of my colleague from Conception Bay South, the Member brought up many petitions. We spoke at it on mass we kind of felt, I guess, at that time that it wasn't right to have six- and seven-year-olds walking for a kilometre and a half, especially given the climate that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador, Madam Chair.

I mean, it's very important that our children are in a good environment to learn, but it also is important that our teachers are in a good environment to teach those kids how to learn.

When it comes to our school system, it's very important that we look at making sure that it's not about eliminating adversity, it's about knowing how to understand adversity and how to learn and how to go about things at your own pace, but make sure that

everybody ends up at the finish line at the same time.

It's not that every kid learns different, I have two boys and they both learned at different levels: that's not to say that they're not both smart. Everybody learns at a different pace, but we have to make sure that the money is there to make sure that that continues, and we give that fulsome education to them.

I do commend the government for introducing our idea of the 1.6-kilometre busing rule. That seems to be working out quite well for the residents of the province.

When we first started, we talked about the money being spent and how we're putting extra money into health care and stuff like that. Health care is so important because it affects everybody and it's everybody that needs health care at some point in their life. That's the reason why when we see an ambulance going down the road, we all pull off to the side because now as an adult and as a parent you realize that, you know, that could be me or one of my people or my family in the back of that ambulance some day and I would expect that somebody would pull off the same as I did after the ambulance had just passed me. So, like I said, it's a respect factor. It's an integrity thing but as a society, we know that these are things that go forward first before anything else.

With that being said, when we first started here, about six years ago, we were told that there was 96,000 people that didn't have a family doctor and that seemed to be a really astronomical number to me for the fact that, basically, it signifies one-quarter of our province, being that we're only about 530,000 population spread out over a vast area. To find out only, I think it was only a year later that it went to 132,000 that didn't have a family doctor; that seemed to be the point where we figured it was getting out of control, from the simple fact that the number wasn't going down, therefore we needed a plan to make sure that that came down.

Therefore, I think that's the reason why we did spend some extra money in health care. Plus, there was some other implementations like the hotel out on Airport Road that are making the budget increase.

But now we find out that there's almost 200,000 that don't have a family doctor and they can be rostered with tele connect or they can be hooked up with Teladoc but, again to make the point that I've been presenting a petition and my colleague from Harbour Main just presented a petition to do with Wi-Fi and cell service. When we look at Teladoc, the people that are missing not having a doctor and having to use Teladoc are usually the more rural areas like my district. The unfortunate part is they don't have the technology readily available to utilize it.

So is that \$21 million best spent with Teladoc or is it better spent maybe on a contract that we could have had for the same services for \$3.5 million and maybe put up a few cell towers? Because when it comes to the budgetary process its all about choices. It's all about priorities and choices of where you want to put your money.

For the people who don't have a family doctor, I really hope that we can really recruit and retain the best physicians because, I think the thing is that, if you have an ailment in our system and you get in the system, once you're in the system, it's the best of the best and these are some of the best caregivers and I never heard anybody really – we complain about wait times and stuff like that but there are places in the world also that don't have wait times at all, because they don't have the availability.

The thing is that we have to enhance the programs. We have to enhance how we treat our medical professionals but keeping them in place and attracting more to come here, is very important to our health care system at this time.

When we talk about choices, we also look at the fact that when we recognize that the travel nurses were getting a little bit out of control, it was at \$100 million at that point. Up until about a month and a half ago, we're already at \$400 million in that file. I don't think that problem is being fixed either so when we talk about choice and we talk about the money going towards health care, we just want to make sure that it's more efficient. We don't want it wasted.

As the shadow Cabinet minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, I would like to touch on one thing and that was the deal that we made for the advertising to attract medical professionals or any other professionals to come to Newfoundland and Labrador, with the soccer team in England. The unfortunate part about that is that it just seems to be too little, for too much. I would think that the \$180,000 that was spent, approximately, might be better off set to the people that we have as our own ambassadors, that travel all over this world, as dart players.

We have some of the best dart players in the whole world that go off to international tournaments and represent Canada, but not only that, they go to other parts of Canada and represent Newfoundland and Labrador. But when they go internationally, they are still representing Newfoundland and Labrador, so I think, that the \$180,000 might have been better spent on giving them a travel subsidy that they do not receive. I don't know why darts are any different than anybody else that are going away for special competition or anything like that, but our dart players could certainly have our logo on their jerseys and that would be an awful lot more advertising than a fourth division soccer team, somewhere in England, that nobody even knows where it's to.

The thing is that we have to start looking out for the things that are important to us and our people and our public, because that's what the money is for. The reason we

wanted to do Interim Supply is that we can keep the lights on, pay the bills, but also give us an opportunity to make better choices with the budget from the previous year.

One thing I would like to touch on in my final minute is that I don't understand the impetus of why we think having this Future Fund, that we're paying interest on, makes sense. I don't understand it, and I guess the way I look at it is, like, I'm not going to go to the bank with my credit card and ask to start a savings account. It just makes no sense. I'm paying interest on money that I'm not utilizing and I'm borrowing.

So I think the opportunity to use a Future Fund might be in the fact that we just talked to the minister on a couple petitions about cell service. It's a rainy day now. Our economy is in trouble. We have a lot of people that are suffering to put meals on the table, that are pill splitting and stuff like that. We just want the government to make better choices.

We know that Interim Supply is necessary and we are in agreement with Interim Supply, but we just want to push the government to make sure that we are making better choices with the people's money.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

It's always an honour, of course, to stand in this hon. House and speak on behalf of our constituents, but I can't help myself. I have to take up where the final Member left off talking about choices.

Number one, we all have a choice in this House of Assembly and we should take it very serious that, when a vote happens, especially on a historic MOU, what we just

saw in January, people have to decide to be here. So make that choice.

And about our rainy day fund, I will take our memory back just a little bit, when we were flushed with cash – quote, unquote – by the previous administration – their words. So much money, the highest we've made and there was no rainy day fund. There was no drizzle and fog fund for that matter either. If money was saved and spent, we would have not found ourselves in a dire situation when the current administration took power in 2016.

So I just want to put that there on the record about choices and rainy day funds. People want to see money spent on infrastructure, obviously debt serving and, of course, our future because do you know what, Chair? I believe this province has a very bright future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: And a lot of it is based on the good leadership of this government and this Premier.

On that note, I want to talk about also something very important and that's where we're coming up on the 100th anniversary where women gained the right to vote in this province and not all women, white women on the Island of Newfoundland, but no one from Labrador gained the vote until later than that.

Do you know what? It didn't come easy. This campaign was led by a lady called Armine Gosling, a resident of St. John's who we're actually going to be erecting a fine statue of this woman. It's only our third statue of a woman who've led these great initiatives in our province, but that's what she did. It was decades old, the fight, but it was 100 years ago. We're going to be celebrating. I always say, Chair, we've made some significant strides on initiatives and gender equity and equality are all around. But there's always work to do.

On that note, I want to talk about some things that are important. As we know, we're in a political time like no other, which we see our neighbours to the south, our most important allies in the world, ultimately, we're seeing some serious regression happening in the country, of course, the United States. As we all know, we have three elections this year: a federal election, a provincial election and we know there are municipal elections happening.

I want to put to voters, when they go to cast their ballots, think about what you're voting for and who you're voting for and why. But, for example, some good things that we've done in my department to advance gender equality.

In December of 2023, the Office of Women and Gender Equality announced \$890,000 to support Quadrangle Newfoundland and Labrador. And this came under the four-year National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. This funding supports the vital education and awareness initiatives tailored to the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, helping to prevent violence and to promote inclusivity. So even in the Office of Women and Gender Equality itself, the mandate has been expanded.

I want to also talk about something important, the topic of abortion. Abortion is legal in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada and is –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: Absolutely – and is publicly funded as a medical procedure under the combined effects of the federal Canada act –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: – Revised Statutes of Canada, 1985, C-6 and provincial health care systems. Advocates had been calling for increased access to abortion services. The Athena Health Centre located in St.

John's here in our great province performs 95 per cent of abortions carried out in the province.

The Athena Health Centre also operates monthly satellite abortion clinics in different areas of the province. And the abortion procedure is a one-day process and individuals do not need a physician's referral.

At the Health Sciences Centre, the abortion procedure is a two-day outpatient procedure. To make an appointment at the Health Sciences Centre, individuals must get a pregnancy confirmation and a physician's referral.

In June 2022 the United States Supreme Court overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade decision of 1973 in which the court ruled that the constitution of the United States generally protected a right to have an abortion.

Many states have since implemented abortion bans. Legal chaos is occurring in that country, as injunctions against individual state laws are being lifted and pre-Roe bans are being interpreted. In a few states, new injunctions are being issued before laws can go into effect.

We commend organizations that support women and gender-diverse people to have access to health care services they need because we certainly believe, on this side of the House, that that's a human right.

Eliminating abortion services will not stop abortions. It will just stop safe abortions and procedures. Abortion rights, fertility and reproductive health are fundamental rights for women and gender-diverse people across Canada.

So it's very concerning. We know what we're seeing in the States and, of course, here in this hon. House everybody has a vested interest in politics and what's happening at every level, I would venture to

say. The thought or the threat that the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada is even considering opening up the debate on legal abortion in this country is just beyond. It is beyond and shameful.

I also have to bring in the question of \$10-a-day daycare. Where does that leader stand on that? And why I'm talking about – we often talk about the different levels of government here in this House as it pertains to our own policies, our own quality of life and cost of living here in this province and the reason I say that is because I have to know where our hon. colleagues on the other side of the House stand on these matters.

How can you stand in support of a leader who doesn't support women or gender-diverse people or even contemplate, to question the idea if it's something that should be debated? Just think about that. It's a human right and it's something that we stand for. We have worked so hard to gain the rights, whether it's the right to vote, whether it's the right to hold public office. Women weren't even allowed to hold public office at that time and there were so many stipulations. We know it was Richard Squires, at the time, who tried to block women from getting in that Legislature. But we know there's a lot of places and there needs to be a place at the table for women and gender-diverse people.

We know society wants to see a government that reflects its own society. The best decisions can be made when everybody is included.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: And I'll say that because I know we believe that. There are a lot of people in here who, of course, stand with that but these are very important matters and I also want to commend the Leader of the Third Party. I heard him in an interview just last night and this morning.

He talked about the federal leadership that we just saw. Mark Carney, a former president for the Bank of Canada as well as in the UK and will become, officially, the prime minister of this country. I'm grateful to hear the Leader of the Third Party say that Canadians now have another option because a lot of people were parking their vote with Pierre Poilievre because they did not want the current leader to continue.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. PARSONS: Exactly. I mean, people I talked to in my district, nobody wanted to vote there but they wanted an alternative and I'm very happy to say, Chair, there is an alternative. There is a very credible alternative. Someone with experience and what we're going into now, facing trade wars like none before, unprecedented, we need somebody, a steady hand at the wheel to make these decisions on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We know what the –

AN HON. MEMBER: We need solutions not slogans.

P. PARSONS: Exactly, my colleague here said we don't need slogans, fancy slogans, we need solutions. We need action and we need evidence of good work that's been done in the past.

I will also take – I took the initiative to do some research, and I looked back actually and it was actually taken from *Hansard* in the House of Commons where Pierre Poilievre talks about same-sex marriage and what he said – there's a lot of chirping going on here, Chair, and I can't hear so I'd like my time. I have a minute and twenty-two seconds left on the clock, I'd like that dignity please, thank you.

Pierre Poilievre is quoted in the House of Commons saying a marriage should be between one man and one woman. That was what he said in the House of

Commons, so imagine that person leading a country like Canada.

L. EVANS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

P. PARSONS: The Member is chirping over there. She's more than welcome to stand up, Chair, I'm going to sit down until she stops because –

L. EVANS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: I ask the Member for Torngat Mountains, please.

L. EVANS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

L. EVANS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

You can have your turn –

L. EVANS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: I ask the Member for Torngat Mountains, please.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair, for your protection.

I think, the Member over there is upset because, I think, she maybe misheard what I was saying. I didn't mention anybody or name any Member in this hon. House. I talked about a leader who could potentially become prime minister who does not support same-sex rights or the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and he's on record as saying it, which has nothing to do with that Member.

I'm just going to continue saying what I want to say. How important it is, that we've worked so hard for women, for gender diverse, for people with disabilities, because everybody has the right to work and to play and to live and to grow in a healthy environment where they can thrive and not worry about fear for violence or ridicule or isolation.

I'll have more to say, again, Chair, but I thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

As a person who grew up as somebody who was considered a lesbian, vilified as a queer, who actually went to university with a lot of people who were in the same category as me, a lot of us didn't even know who we were in terms of sexual orientation, I have never, ever felt a glimmer of any opposition from the PC Party.

Even after I left them, Chair, and went as an the independent, I still had the support on those issues of who I am as a person, who I am as an advocate, who I am as an MHA who speaks in the House of Assembly to try to help the people in my district who are mostly Indigenous people, disenfranchised, impacted through generations of intergenerational trauma with, really, no help coming. No help for 10 years with the Liberal government, Chair.

I say as an open person, to be open back when I was young was very, very difficult. I've seen the harm done to individuals who, now, I see young people out there and they remind of somebody that I've known who was harmed because they were considered queer, they were considered gay, they were considered a lesbian, they were considered much more derogatory words that I don't

know if I'm allowed to use in this House of Assembly, Chair.

For me to be here, to know that the rights of all people are protected by the PC Party, the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, the access to abortion, the access to family planning. But, Chair, I'll tell you what the PC Party does for me, what the PC caucus does for me: when I speak about access to be able to get your prescriptions for your medication; for your insulin; for your blood thinners, so you don't have a blood clot; your high blood pressure medication, so you don't actually have a stroke or a heart attack; your access to your birth control pills, so you don't have an unexpected pregnancy. They support me in that. They support me in access to health care.

So when a Member on the other side gets up and talks about the federal Conservatives and, in actual fact vilifies the federal Conservatives, I want to make sure the people of Newfoundland know where I stand. I stand with the Progressive Conservatives of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Chair, one of the things I always said when I first got elected, one of the things I first said, is you know something? I said to people in my district, I said you know this politics is really about our access to services. It's not a hockey game. If you cheer for the Toronto Maple Leafs, you can hate the Montreal Canadiens, and you don't have to cheer for them even they're in the Stanley Cup playing against an American team.

But at the end of the day, when you're looking at an MHA that's going to fight for you to try to get so the Elders are helped, that the children in care can come home, so that families don't have to be cold in the morning or hungry when they go to school. You have to elect an MHA in Torngat

Mountains who's going to raise those issues. That's going to talk about the issues, Chair. That's going to bring them forward and also that has support.

What I always try to do is a lot of times with these issues I downplay them. I don't say how bad it really is, because in actual fact, I say to my constituents if I told people how bad things really were or really are, unfortunately most people would not believe me. And if I talked about those issues in the stark reality, it would turn a lot of people off and they would basically close their ears.

For me, I have to be out there, I have to be 100 per cent factual. If I ever make a mistake, I have to go back and apologize for that one little mistake so that it's not used against me when I raise things about hunger, about cold houses, about being able to access health care. I have to explain what being bumped off a passenger flight means. It's about when you have a doctor's appointment out there for treatment, for surgery, for MRIs and you can't get out of there because there's no seat for you on the plane, that's what we mean by bumped.

So, Chair, for me, I always have to be truthful, but one of the things I always try to do is I always try to do is I always try to apply what's happening in my district to the rest of Newfoundland as well because access to warm houses is not just about my district, Chair. It's not only about my district. Access to health care is not only in my district. Access to supports for our elderly is not only in my district.

We've had 10 years of the Liberal government, Chair, where we've seen crises. We've seen during COVID that we locked down good so that we didn't have a lot of cases early on when people were at risk of dying, but what did we do? Did we use that time to actually look at post-COVID health care?

Ontario was struggling with hundreds of deaths each day, Chair. We look at Alberta,

what was happening out there, they didn't have the luxury. But what did we do? This government sat on their hands and now we're dealing with the crisis.

So for me, sometimes I get a little bit upset but I got to say, over on this side, we will fight for access to health care; we will fight for cost of living and things like being able to heat your houses. But at the end of the day, we're not going to trample on human rights. We, the Progressive Conservatives, are not going to be out there telling women when they can start their family.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Chair, I also want to say, in actual fact, vulnerable people, groups who have been harmed in the past because they were different, we're going to make sure there are supports in there so they can live their lives freely without harm.

Sometimes there's confusion with the general public when they're trying to get their heads around who or what a gender is or a sexual orientation or an identity, and I get confused. Somebody asked me about trans people and, for me, I grew up knowing people who were trans. We didn't call them trans back then, say, for example, somebody who was born a male who identified as a female – and I got to say, it's heartbreaking. In my memories in actual fact, it's heartbreaking because I see these beautiful people who were so kind and smart and intelligent and had such a bright future, only to have it wrecked because they were different, and I take that with me now. I want to make sure we never, ever go back to that time.

So when somebody talks to me about trans, I say the most important thing is you may not understand but you need to accept. You need to accept who they are, who they want to be and make sure they aren't harmed because of that. That's the most important thing.

Over here, I know all the MHAs, if they saw somebody whether it was a man or a woman or somebody who had a different identity, if they were being harmed, these people on my side would speak up, would try to help, would try to protect because that's who we are.

It's really, really unfair, Chair, to have to listen to the – I don't know if I can say verbal diarrhea, but when somebody is just out there spewing out stuff like that and basically fear mongering – I can say that in the House of Assembly – over on this side, with the Progressive Conservative Party, we're going to make sure that everybody's rights are protected, but also, we're going to make sure that we have positive change for health care, positive change for the cost of living, positive change for our elders.

For example, we actually had a motion before Christmas to basically help out the seniors but we were prevented from doing that because we didn't have the majority. We were voted down and we had –

CHAIR: The hon. Member's time is expired.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to stand and have a few words. That was a very touching speech, I must say. I'm sure that every Member on this side agrees with the words that were just spoken.

It's pretty hard to get lumped in with somebody who is making statements in Ottawa, and using the House of Assembly to say how can we ever support someone like that, when we're not, and those views. I'm sure all Members in this House don't support Poilievre's views on that topic

because I'm sure every Member in this House of Assembly would stand up against that view, and the Member for Torngat Mountains just did a great job explaining why we're all against it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: Madam Chair, I'm going to talk today again because I heard a lot of statistics today about health care.

The Member for St. George's - Humber – last week when I was having a few words and I said people from his district are calling our office, he said you're getting calls from my district also and people watching it, they said yes, we did call him.

What happened, they had siblings at the emergency room for 16, 18 hours trying to call your office. They couldn't get a call, so they called on your behalf for my district for the siblings that were in the emergency department that you wouldn't return the call. Your office didn't call. So I just want to say people did call. That was the reason why they did, because siblings were in the emergency department. One was in there for 16 hours in a chair. That's why they were calling. It's a real story. You should stand up for it. It's a real story in the regional hospital in Corner Brook.

You hear all the statistics today in a question from the minister, all these new health care teams, all these collaborative teams, all the 811 numbers, 90 per cent or even higher of the 811 go to emergency. That's what you get. How can you honestly stand up and say that if someone is here with a mole and say, okay, look at the mole – oh, go to emergency. How can the government actually stand up in this House and say that you have 811 where over 90 per cent says go to emergency, saying that it's primary care? It's a fallacy.

It's just not correct. It's just absolutely not correct and to keep on saying that information, to give the impression to people

here in Newfoundland and Labrador that everybody's good – what was it – we're down now to about 30,000 because people got access to primary care to call someone. They don't know where they're at. They don't know who they are, yet you're told go to 911. Well, that's primary care – it's not.

Then I asked the minister a question last week about the nurse practitioners and he said, no, we're not going to allow that. It's shameful. It's actually shameful that a nurse practitioner, who right now sees a gap, people who don't have doctors – there are three in Corner Brook, I think, maybe four – that on their own time, nights and weekends, say we're going to go out and we got a shop set up. For them to charge \$50, \$55, a lot of seniors go, and for the government to not allow them to bill MCP, there is something fundamentally wrong.

I'll say it to every Member that's over there, if you were a senior or any family member of yours was a senior and couldn't afford the nurse practitioner, to pay for it, and they had to go to get a blood test, then go back to follow up and they had to do extra blood work three, four, five times a year and they couldn't afford to go, I can tell you, every Member on the opposite side would be standing in this Legislature and say, why can't Mom and Dad bill MCP? Why can't they?

It's just unbelievable why this government and the acting minister at the time stood up and said we're not going to allow it. Alberta started 63. Then I get a letter from the department saying, oh, we got to wait until I think it's April next year because the change of the federal Health Act; yet, Alberta can set up 63 and bill the government.

There's something fundamentally wrong with that and for some reason, for some ungodly reason, with people who are associated with the health care system in Newfoundland and Labrador and did patient care, can't understand why people can't

afford to go to a nurse practitioner, and won't allow it. They just won't allow it.

There's something wrong. That's where you lose the connection with the common person, that's where you lose the connection with the people who are suffering and that's what's happening here. This idea, in the letter that I got, that we're trying to fill up the nurse practitioners in the hospitals until we're fully complemented with the nurse practitioners, we're not going to allow it. I just don't understand because you're educated people.

These nurse practitioners work full-time. They're doing it on the nights and weekends. They're not leaving the hospital setting. They're just actually not leaving. It's amazing to me why a government who is supposed to be – I go back to the Liberal philosophy: It's for the common people. That was always the Liberal philosophy. For the common person. The person who's struggling. The person who needs a helping hand. The person who gets left behind. That's the Liberal philosophy.

For this Liberal government to take that Liberal philosophy now, because they want to say that we got all these 811 services, we got all this family care stuff, we got the new hospital and forget the common person who really needs that help: there's something fundamentally wrong with the direction of the Liberal Party. I can honestly tell you that.

Then I look at Dr. Ennis office. Now they say to go to Dr. Ennis office. Dr. Ennis is a doctor who takes 50 patients a day. You got to go line up. You see people in the wintertime, 6 o'clock in the morning, outside his office lined up trying to stay warm, but yet we won't let nurse practitioners to bill MCP.

Which parent over there will you allow to go out 6 o'clock in the morning. Any Liberal who would do that, stand up. Would put your parents out 6 o'clock in the morning

because they haven't got a family doctor, they can't afford to go to the nurse practitioner. There's no good to call 811 because you're going to emergency and spend 25, 30 hours there and you're lining up. Any minister over there will stand up and say: My parent would do that. Stand up – stand up if anybody there would say that they would let their parent. You're lucky, you can afford it.

But the minute you won't allow your parents to stand outside in minus 10, minus 15 degrees for two and a half hours just to get your name on the list, then you've got to stay there until you're called that day, and you won't allow to bill MCP. You've lost your way. I'm telling you; you've lost your way. It's a simple fix. You would save 3,000, 4,000 or 5,000 people from a visit to the emergency department or more. A lot more in the run of a year. I'm just saying how many of those three patients they could take.

For anybody in this Legislature, and if you can't afford to help your parents out and you want them to stand in a line up, it's fundamentally wrong, I say to the Liberal Party, who I supported for years and I was a part of since I was 12 years old. I've never seen such abuse. This is abuse that we could fix so easy. When you get these fancy letters saying oh, we've got to wait, but yet Alberta can go ahead and do it and set up 63, but we can't allow that to happen – on their own time – so that the people who can afford to go, can go.

I challenge anybody – I challenge anybody to come up with a sensible answer because there are none. It's arrogance. It's actually arrogance, and you losing the touch of the people that's suffered. That's the sad part, you actually losing that feeling. You see that many times in governments, when you're inside this building and everybody tells you it's all going to bubble –

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Chair.

It's my honour and privilege to stand in the House today. I want to thank the people of St. John's West for their support and encouragement of my role here in the House of Assembly. I think it's an important day for all of us. Reading the news today, of course, we're hearing more and more about the president of the United States and his continuous, I guess, his continuous focus on the trade war, I will call it that. You've heard that by many pundits over the last number of days and weeks and his call to annex Canada.

I can tell you that I don't think there's a person in this House that would stand for that. I think that we are united in addressing the concerns that tariffs have brought to our doorstep and the concerns of our sovereignty.

Chair, my parents voted in favour of Confederation, they had a choice. They had a choice, in the 1940s of going with the United States or going with Canada or continuing on as a country of our own. At the end of the day, the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador decided and chose not to become members of the United States, not to continue on as a dominion or a colony of Britain but to join the great country of Canada. I remember speaking to my father about this, who voted as I said in the days leading up to 1949 or the months leading up to 1949 and he would often say that it was the most important vote for him.

He would say that because, you know, he came from a little town of Fortune Harbour in Norte Dame Bay and in Fortune Harbour, Norte Dame Bay, there was a lot of decent, a lot of discussion at the time and there were some who were not in favour of joining

Canada, they wanted to remain independent and my father stood, sometimes in a heated argument with his family about how he thought it was our best choice to join Canada and you know, as I said in the House of Commons when I was a Member of Parliament, I said, look I'm a tenth generation, as best I know, tenth generation Newfoundlander and Labradorian, but I'm a first generation Canadian, but I can tell you I'm a very proud Canadian and I'm very proud of our country and we will do everything, everything in our power to ensure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are protected and we remain a sovereign nation and that we remain focused on what's important to us, to our values here in Newfoundland and Labrador, to our values here in Canada.

So it's been a challenging day to hear some of what's coming out of the United States but we will stand strong and we will stand united.

I speak today on the Interim Supply Bill that's before the House, and we've had many hours of debate. Of course, that's perfectly acceptable and legitimate. We have 75 hours in total for the vote, that includes many hours of what I call line-by-line review in Estimates.

So it's certainly something that I note that we want to make sure, I think, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, that we do full scrutiny of the budget to come. I do hope we pass Interim Supply within the next number of hours because I want to save the maximum number of hours for the kind of review and detailed analysis of the budget that is not yet brought down.

What Interim Supply is, as you know, Chair, is that this is really ensuring that we have the monies available over the next three months as we debate an upcoming budget, that we have monies to be able to pay for our doctors and our nurses and our teachers and to keep government going. Interim Supply is based on a review and

analysis of the budget that has been passed, the '24-'25 budget. So you take a portion of what you required for that and you say that's what's required in the three months – it's not, necessarily, one-quarter. It could be a little bit different, and the reason why it's different is because you have a lot of upfront payments.

For example, in Transportation and Infrastructure, they have to make their contracts for infrastructure, for roads, et cetera. You have to put aside that money. In this year's Interim Supply, we've also put about \$200 million in contingency. What does that mean? Well, we've set aside \$200 million that we may have to access and we may have to access it. We don't necessarily have to access it, but we want to have it available in case we need to support businesses, workers because of these tariff threats.

So we don't know exactly what that will look like in the near future because those tariffs haven't come into effect yet. We don't know the impact that it may have but we're going to have money available, be prepared and be prudent and responsible as we move forward with this Interim Supply and with the potential of these tariff threats. I know, I can sense and I can tell you that I think we stand united in this Legislature. I feel that we do. We stand united in this Legislature to stand strong for Canada and stand strong for our sovereignty.

This bill, today, this Interim Supply is a tremendous amount of money, actually. Our budget, every year, is growing as we evolve in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and make more investments that we need to make in health care and education and in infrastructure. This total allocation is \$3,949,634,900, a tremendous sum of money. But allow me a few moments to talk about why this is important.

I want to address something that I heard earlier from the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue. I always want to make sure I get

the name right, Placentia West - Bellevue. He questioned why would we have a Future Fund? Now we've debated it in this House and I can tell you that we didn't receive unanimous support on the Future Fund, but it's a very important fund for this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Allow me to tell the people of the province today that already we have \$359 million in this fund. Why is that important? Because we take a portion of the revenues that this government receives from non-renewable resources and we put them aside. We put them in a special fund.

But, Chair, I will say to this House why I feel this is so important, that money will grow. Not only because we'll earn revenues on that money, we'll earn interest on that money and that interest is more than anything that we would have to pay when we borrow to put that money in the fund, but let me tell you what, I think, is a staggering number. In five years' time, based on last year's budget, that will be \$1.3 billion. That's not including interest.

Now imagine, Chair, if during the last – what I'm going to call, when we started in the oil and gas industry, the last Progressive Conservative administration, if we had put that money aside, think about how much money we would have in this province today. The impact would be staggering.

So while it may be challenging from a budgetary perspective today –

J. DWYER: (Inaudible) what about the kids who are going to school hungry? Like let's talk about that. That's (inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

S. COADY: I didn't interrupt you, Sir. I didn't interrupt you. I would ask you the same courtesy. Have a little respect for a person who's trying to educate people, please. Thank you.

I will say to this House, that I looked up how much money – back in 2012-2013, so 12 years ago, I went back that far. The price of oil was \$112. That was the closing price, \$112 for a barrel of oil. I think I saw today it's around \$70 a barrel, so \$70.

Imagine if we had taken a portion of that and put it aside, how much money we would have today. The Member opposite shouted out about children going to school hungry. Imagine how much money we would be able to provide today if we had been smart enough to have a Future Fund in 2012.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Imagine the amount of money that we would've been able to invest in health care if we'd had that money.

Now, I know that they're Members opposite, and I appreciate the debate, when we had it, about the Future Fund – oh, I'm just out of time.

CHAIR: The minister's time has expired.

S. COADY: I will come back to this issue.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Chair.

Again, it's great to get up here and talk about Bill 105, and it's great to get up here and have a chance to speak for the residents of my district.

I feel that people come to me and we have a great relationship, unlike probably a previous email you might have got in the last couple of days. But we have a great relationship with the district and they have a lot of concerns and I'm glad to be their MHA. I'm not going to get up here to make a campaign speech if I ever wanted to run for

federal politics like some other Members here in the House of Assembly that might want to do that. If they've got ambition to do so, you can certainly come off with a great campaign speech for federal politics.

But in the meantime, it's always great to get here and talk about our district. As the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave may have been talking about her campaign speech for federal politics – I don't know, it's not said to be known. But she's not hearing the same things that I'm hearing in my district. That's not the same things that I've been hearing when she says, like, health care, things are great in the province and that kind of stuff.

We have some good issues, yes. I'm hearing health care is one of the biggest reasons in my district. Finding physicians, of course, people with access to a family physician, it's after declining. People trying to get their drugs, trying to get prescriptions filled, it's certainly getting harder by the day for to get that done.

Access to health care alone, emergency services, I'm hearing on numerous occasions, diversions, closures to emergency services, especially in the Central region, which causes a great bit of traffic on the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre where the emergency service, emergency rooms are always overloaded, they're exploding, they're bursting at the seams because of diversions from other areas. In 2016, of course, the Liberal government cut the 24-hour emergency service at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre.

If the 24-hour service was open as promised in the past two elections by Liberal premiers, Liberal candidates went out and promised it. If they'd mind owning up to their promises, that might streamline some of the emergency services in Central Newfoundland. Diversions in the nighttime at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre wouldn't have to go to Central

Newfoundland Regional Health Centre. That way when you've got a diversion down the Connaigre Peninsula, in the health centre down there, when they have to come up to Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre, that could streamline, give them a chance to might be able to get in to see a physician at Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre. We hear of those diversions. Members might get up and say things are great but that's not what we're hearing.

We get a lot of calls from seniors just to afford the cost of living most of the time. I know the Aging Well at Home Grant came out, the \$400. Everything's a help; we'll take anything as a help. Sure we will but it doesn't solve the problems. It's only little fixes.

I'm hearing seniors trying to find home care hours. Actually, I spoke on a petition here yesterday. They're trying to get home care hours. They can't even get workers to be able to get the hours to stay in their own homes. That's not what seniors are looking for. That's not the kind of help that seniors are looking for; is a \$400 fix. Great help, you know, it can help in various ways but that's only a band-aid. It's not a fix. It's not a fix.

Our seniors want to be in their own homes. They want to be in their own homes. So we have to find ways of getting those resources, even the workers; getting those resources so that people can be in their own homes longer, where they're happier. It's healthier to the senior. It's been proven. It was always proven.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: It was always proven. It keeps seniors out of our hospitals, keeps them out of the acute care beds and they're home where they belong. Not band-aids. Not little fixes. So that's something that I'm hearing in my district.

Medical transportation, MTAP, doesn't go far enough. Lots of times medical transportation doesn't go far enough. I'm finding people, especially now because they can't see physicians in – I'll just say in our area, Grand Falls-Windsor, Bishop's Falls, in the Central area. Lots of times there's no surgeon or a physician that can deal with some of the problems that they have. They have to come all the way out here to St. John's. They have to travel to St. John's.

Medical transportation sometimes doesn't add up to what they need to come out to the Health Sciences probably or wherever the physician may be that they have to see. They have hotel rooms, they have meals, they have travel, they have expenses. If they burst a tire or whatever, anything can happen. Medical transportation doesn't cover that cost for them.

It maybe an emergency, they have to go back home, might have to do this again in two week's time. Same thing happens, so medical transportation doesn't do it.

I've relied lots of times on our community sector. Lots of times when somebody calls me and they say, what I'm going to do, I have to get an appointment for three week's time, but I still can't, even with the help from medical transportation, how can I do it? I'll refer them to one of our community groups, that's what I do. Either the Kinsmen, which I proudly spoke of a member here yesterday being named a life member. Or the Lions Club, which I spoke of another member here that was also a life member.

So that's what you're down to resorting on is the community sectors to help aid with their transportation to see their surgeons, see their physicians outside of the region that they're in. Medical transportation doesn't do it.

Cost of living, well we know where the cost of living is gone. Cost of living is just unaffordable for most average individuals of Newfoundland and Labrador and a lot in my

district. Sugar tax, sure, it's a burden to people who have to make a choice: Do I buy that milk, or do I buy the cheaper drink?

That milk is \$4.99, those sodas are 99 cents. What do I buy? That's the choice that they have. That's the choice they have. They have to buy the soda that's 99 cents because they can't afford to pay \$4.99 for a two litre for three children that they've got home trying to get to school, especially on a single mother or single parent. That's the choices that you've got, you know? That's the choice that they have to make.

The cost of living is way out of hand of the things that people – fuel is, again, the same thing. They're trying to get enough fuel just to get to work, so they can provide for their families. The cost of living is way out of whack.

Groceries on the shelves. To buy the regular groceries on the shelves, it's gone – what people say, it's gone way out of whack. You know, they can't afford to do this anymore, and we need to put incentives into those programs so that people can – the seniors can stay in their own homes.

Health care, you know, we can provide the health care to the people who need it. If we can't provide it in their own region, we have to provide the medical transportation so that they can do so. There are lots of things we can do. There are lots of things we can do, but it's not so easy as to what Members over there might say that we're just doing wonderful because that's not what we hear. That's not what we hear on this side. We are hearing different stories in our region than what we're hearing right now.

With that, Chair, thank you for the time, and I'll get another chance to speak on that later.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Always a pleasure to stand in this House of Assembly, and those that afforded me the opportunity, and that's the people of the great District of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

The theme, I think, on the other side today is choices. So maybe I should sing the song by George Jones, "Choices." They have to be made, and I'm going to talk about some of the choices that have been made on the other side.

But first I'm going to talk about my district, obviously, and about the fishery. We know there are challenges around the tariff threat, and that has a lot of implications on the fishery, or it may have implications on the fishery. We hope it doesn't but with the moving target of the president, you never know in the run of a day what's going to be tasked with us. So in terms of a measured response, it's hard to give a measured response when you don't know what he's going to come up with when he wakes up in the morning.

Madam Chair, there's an issue out there that talks about the marine protected areas down on the South Coast. I've made it very clear and will make it clear again that I think we'll all support marine protected areas, but not at the expense of the livelihoods of fishermen.

Whether that's aquaculture or mining, there are a lot of concerns around it and I've made it clear that I'm not going to be supporting it if it can't find that balance, if it's not right for the people of my district, and other districts as well because there is supply and side industries of the fishing industry. So I'll make it clear, I will not be supporting what's really on the table right now. The map has shrunk quite a bit

because of the advocacy of myself and others, and that's important.

I listened to the Member on the other side talk about health care and a lot of problems. Listen, go anywhere in this country and find out concerns about health care, they're there, but the problem is you never talk about the good stuff that's going on. The people of the province, we're tasked with that as well. I get it in terms of opposition, but you talk about the diversions.

We had probably the most challenging Baie Verte Peninsula as well in terms of ambulances going over that road in terms of diversions. It was a very challenging time but we don't have diversions any more because we've made improvements down in Harbour Breton and down in Coast of Bays. You should recognize that because that is important for the people of my district.

Now, is everything 100 per cent well? No, it's not. Any government can do what they want, people are still going to get sick and that's the unfortunate part about it, but it's up to us to put the system in place.

In the Bay d'Espoir Medical Clinic in St. Alban's, they wanted urgent virtual care. They got it immediately, but obviously we had to have the staff and we got staff committed. We've recently had another nurse practitioner come to the area. That's good news stories. People need to hear that. People need to know that there's a plan and there is some hope in that plan – and for a hospital in Harbour Breton.

I have clinics in Hermitage, Mose Ambrose, Belleoram and that's not just because of doctors, it's because of other staff as well and the commitment from them. I say thank you to them. The challenges of isolated communities in terms of health care, a lot of challenges. So we're not dismissing the challenges or all those emails that you say you get over there. We get them too, and I respond to them. I do respond to them but I

don't respond to them and say, listen, I'm going to have a fix for your issue tomorrow, but do I try to have a fix? Absolutely, 100 per cent.

They're over there talking about roadwork. I make no apologies for the roadwork in my district – none whatsoever. The Member for Exploits –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. LOVELESS: You had your turn to speak. It was punishment listening to you but, listen, you had your turn. I have mine. You show some respect. You asked for it from over here. We ask for it for you.

So I know he's attentively –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. LOVELESS: Pardon me? So the Member for Exploits, over there, he likes to talk about Route 360, the investment. Oh, shouldn't have invested all that money down on Route 360. Well, that's a lot of his constituents, by the way.

So he wants to talk about Route 360 in a bad way, a negative way when we talk about the diversions, but he doesn't give credit in terms of the roadwork, which is very important because I'll tell you why. Because it was neglected for 12 years, and I don't believe it was because of the Member that was down there. It was because the government at the time didn't see the importance of investing in the roadways down in Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

There's money being invested now and there's money being invested in other parts. When I was in TI, this wonderful Finance Minister agreed to give us a \$1-billion investment in roadways. I even travelled to some of the Opposition districts, travelled some hard roads in the Opposition district. Absolutely. Will they get fixed? Hopefully.

You never know, but that's the importance of it.

Brush cutting is very important, and I don't apologize for the brush cutting. I fight for brush cutting because we do have 2½ hours from the district to the mainland in Central Newfoundland and brush cutting is important, especially for those paramedics, those ambulance drivers that are driving over the road all hours of the night and day.

I'll move to some of the comments because I only have four minutes, but I'll have more to say. The Member for Terra Nova likes to talk about the Muskrat Falls deal and ask the question when we had the people on the floor of the House of Assembly. Muskrat Falls is a good deal. The capacity issue, yes, is welcome for any CEO, absolutely, but she did reference, in terms of the cost of it, nobody – unfortunately, Muskrat Falls, the cost of it, is on the shoulders of seniors in our province and everybody else in our province. That's where the problem lies. That's unfair. We have to write hundreds of billions of dollars cheques every year so it doesn't double. That's the unfairness and you can go anywhere in the province and people will talk about it and say the same thing – 100 per cent. But Voisey's Bay – now a former Leader of the Opposition who became premier said you could drive a Mack truck through it.

Now, I got the attention for it – remember. You couldn't drive a Mack truck through it. Actually, he praised the deal after the fact, it did not bear the cost on the people of this province, which is key here. They went underground. It's been extended for valuable work. I have buddies that work with Voisey's Bay. It's a good project and the cost of it was not borne on the shoulders of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

So I'll end, the Member for Ferryland asked a question today on some online posting that was made. Listen, you can bring whatever you wish from an online posting, but the problem I have with it, that online

posting was false and it was unfair. So you made the choice to share it here in this House of Assembly. It's unfair and it's false. That's not fair to people who are looking at it, because people are calling me and saying: What's this missing person? I'm going to tell you one thing, I'm not a missing person I can guarantee you that.

I don't even know if the Member for Ferryland really wanted to do it, your leader wanted you to do it, 100 per cent; absolutely wanted you to do it. Tell me that I'm wrong, I'm not wrong because what they shared was unfair; the stuff in that was unfair.

The Member for Exploits is over shaking his head. You know the difference, it was unfair. It's false. False information being spread online is a scare right now to a lot of people and it's unfair. It shouldn't happen. It's all about choices. If I was on the other side, I wouldn't have made that choice to ask that question because it's false and it's unfair. That's a good point.

Chair, the Member for Exploits is beating his gums over there. He was up speaking before. He talks about: don't have access to home care. That's false. There is access to home care. He won't go to the crux of really where it is. There are medical professionals that do assessments on seniors whether they get home care. So for you to say that you can't get home care is false – 100 per cent false. So you may want to get up and correct that. It is available and it's done through assessment by valued medical professionals in this province.

I will end, Chair, the Member for Topsail - Paradise – I may not have the time – his reference the other day about CAs on this side. I ask the hon. Member across the way to get up and apologize to my CA who works very hard on a daily basis.

I don't have it in front of me that I can read it word for word what you said, and I will make it clear, I wasn't here, but when you said that about the CAs –

CHAIR: The Member's time is expired.

E. LOVELESS: – I ask you to get up and apologize to the CAs of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

P. DINN: You read it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

P. DINN: Shut your mouth.

CHAIR: I ask the Member for Topsail - Paradise to please retract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

E. LOVELESS: Look at the *Hansard*.

P. DINN: Read it out then.

CHAIR: Order, please!

E. LOVELESS: Are you going to apologize?

P. DINN: Read it out first.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please, or we'll go in recess.

Order, please!

I ask the Member for Topsail - Paradise to please retract his comments.

P. DINN: What is the comment I'm retracting?

CHAIR: You just shouted out across the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Could we please take a recess?

Thank you.

We're in recess.

Recess

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Are the House Leaders ready?

The language displayed by the Member for Topsail - Paradise in this House was clearly unparliamentary and I ask the Member to please retract his statement.

P. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

In the heat of the moment when the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune reiterated lies, lies about what I said in the House about his CA, which does not exist, and you can go through *Hansard* all you want.

CHAIR: I ask the Member to please retract.

P. DINN: And in listening to the Member for Waterford Valley who pointed at me and shouting directions at me, I certainly apologize if my directions back at him offended him.

CHAIR: For the Member for Topsail - Paradise, the retraction has to be unequivocal. I ask the Member to please retract the language.

P. DINN: Unequivocally, I retract the language that I used that offended him.

CHAIR: Thank you.

E. JOYCE: Point of order.

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

E. JOYCE: Point of order, Madam Chair.

The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune just a few minutes ago – and I'm doing this for all the Members of the House – was upset because someone said something about a thing that was put on about people looking for you. You felt that it was wrong to put out that type of information – which it is. If you don't have a chance to respond, I agree with you.

Within a minute, he stood up and said the Member for Topsail said something which he said I wasn't here, I don't have the *Hansard* but he should apologize because he said something about CAs.

CHAIR: I ask the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands for the point of order.

E. JOYCE: That is the point of order. The Member should stand up and apologize to the Member for Topsail because you even said yourself, I wasn't here. I didn't hear it. I don't have *Hansard*. So you should do what you asked the Members from the Opposition to do. Stop making statements that are not true.

CHAIR: No point of order.

E. JOYCE: So I ask that you withdraw those statements just for the Member –

CHAIR: There's no point of order. I ask the Member to please sit.

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

E. LOVELESS: I will respond to that point of order.

I did not say I didn't have *Hansard*. I admitted that I was not here, but I heard it. This is what was said in the House. In my office, said by the Member for Topsail -

Paradise, unlike the government's side, we all have a very dedicated CA and ourselves in the office. We answer those calls as best as we can, but we continue to see – we continue to see.

So based on that, the dedicated CAs, not on this side. So the Member for Terra Nova –

CHAIR: The Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, we're going to take this exchange under consideration and report back to the House.

Thank you very much.

E. LOVELESS: Okay, I'll respect that Chair, absolutely.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Get back to the Interim Supply. There are numerous things that I can talk about. I've numerous points written down. One thing I want to talk about that has not come up since this House opened, I don't think, don't recall hearing it, it's an important thing in my view, and that is the fact that I have genuine concern and I believe all Members of this House should have genuine concern as it relates to the operation of our university. I have not heard that come up since the House opened.

We had a very scathing Auditor General's report that came out about a year ago, or so, on the operations of Memorial University. Then more recently, over the last couple or three months ago, the Auditor General released a second report on Memorial University as it relates to the management of the infrastructure and the crumbling infrastructure and the fact that there appears to be no plan in place by the university to address the infrastructure issue.

The fact that they're collecting fees from students – I can't remember what the fee is called, but there's a fee that they put in place, campus fee or whatever it's called, to address infrastructure and apparently that money was not spent on infrastructure; it was spent on equipment and office equipment and all this kind of stuff. It was not placed on infrastructure.

So this is an important issue, (a), because I think we would all agree in this House that Memorial University is something that this province and I'm sure this Legislature always has and will continue hopefully to have great pride in. Education, as has been said, I've heard it said before, is the great equalizer, if you will. Regardless of your background and your economic background, your family's economic background, education offers everybody the opportunity to succeed and to be basically whatever they want.

That institution, we have put out so many great students and business leaders and people who are leading all over the world, in various capacities, whether it be in business, whether it be in the Armed Forces, the entertainment industry, wherever.

There are Newfoundlanders all over the world that have graduated from that great institution that have gone on to do some pretty great things and it's something that we need to ensure, that that institution is operating the way it was meant to operate and right now, we have big problems at MUN. There are two audits, as I said, back-to-back audits from the Auditor General that clearly demonstrate to me that we have significant issues. I know a lot of what's happened is because the fact that Memorial University, I guess, since its inception has had total autonomy.

There's nothing wrong with academic autonomy but when there's taxpayers' money that's continuously pumped into that institution, albeit it's been reduced a lot over

the years. I'm sure there will be people at MUN and there will be students who constantly remind us all of the reductions in funding that has gone to Memorial and the increases in tuition that have occurred and so on. There are people that have concerns about that, not everybody does but a lot of people do.

The bottom line is that I think that we have a responsibility here in this House of Assembly, not just for today but for the future, to ensure that Memorial University is operating the way it should be operating. That they have appropriate programming in place and that they have the appropriate infrastructure in place to be able to deliver a top-class education to the students of this province today, tomorrow and into the future.

I'm not sure what plans the government may have because we haven't heard the budget yet. I don't know if it has any plans to assist in any way the university, in terms of dealing with some of these infrastructure issues. I believe it's inevitable that, at some point in time, given the huge deficit that they have in terms of their infrastructure, even if it's one-off project-specific funding, I think that we're going to have no choice, perhaps, but to step in and assist, to some degree, with some of the infrastructure problems.

I don't know if that starts this year or if there's even any intention, but it's going to happen eventually, I think. Whenever it happens, I say to the Minister of Finance and the government that we can no longer, whether it be the funding that we are currently pumping into that facility, whether it be increases in funding, whether it be one-off project-specific funding, I say to the Minister of Finance, in all sincerity: We need to have more control. We need to ensure that before anymore taxpayers' money goes into that institution, that there is an actual plan, that there's an infrastructure plan that makes sense, that there is a proper maintenance program, maintenance and repair program for that institution.

We need to make sure that they've done a proper inventory of the space that exists because one of the things the Auditor General came out with is she said: Here we are with empty spaces here, here and here, yet we're leasing spaces. So while there's available space and existing infrastructure, according to the audit, they were leasing spaces around town and paying leases to, I guess, private concerns and so on, to go leasing spaces. So there just seems to be no rhyme nor reason to what's going on, and no solid plan, and I would say that that is very concerning. It should be very concerning, I think, to us all.

I'm sure the Minister of Education is – well obviously we would all be aware of the audit – I'm sure the Minister of Education – I would hope the Minister of Education has had discussions and ongoing discussions with Memorial University, and I hope that we're going to be a little more hands on with the operations of the university, and we're going to make sure that we address or that these infrastructure issues are going to be addressed properly.

If that requires money, additional money from the public purse – which undoubtedly in my mind, it's going to; I cannot see how it's going to happen without some funding beyond what we're doing now – then I would certainly encourage the Minister of Education, the Minister of Finance, the government, as I said, to ensure that we're not just simply cutting cheques. The days of simply cutting cheques, handing it over and saying, oh, they'll look after it, they know what they're doing. I think those days should be gone. I think that two consecutive audits have shown us, both from an operational point of view, as well as an infrastructure point of view, that there are big issues, and we simply cannot throw money at it and write cheques and walk away.

Yes, MUN can continue to have academic freedom, academic autonomy and so on, but when it comes to some of these other

issues, I feel that the audit has shown us that we're going to have to be a little more hands on in this Legislature, or the government's going to have to be a little more hands on. That we're going to have to keep closer tabs, more audits. We're going to have to be looking for more progress reports and so on.

I guess it kind of ties into something I've been saying in this Legislature for years now, budget after budget after budget, when I've talked about the need to be reviewing our agencies, boards, commissions and so on. Because that's where all the money is. That's where all the money is. Not core government. There is money in core government, of course, but as I've said before, we're counting pencils in the minister's office while billions of dollars go out the door with no accountability from this House of Assembly.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I now recognize the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Thank you, Chair.

Chair, it is an honour to get up here this afternoon and to talk about the second established megaproject in Newfoundland and Labrador, agriculture. If you go back to the first census of Newfoundland and Labrador it highlighted our farming production. We're all here across the 40 districts because of the importance that our forefathers and mothers placed on the capacity to be able to feed themselves, agriculture. We've lost our way. The Member for Exploits indicated presently 20 per cent of food production is locally derived.

Yes, we need elbows up, but we need elbows up with a shovel and a rake in hand to be able to grow our food production. In doing that, we would mitigate the impacts of

tariffs, both nationally and internationally, we would have control of our own destiny and that's important. We need the capacity to be able to feed ourselves locally.

The other benefit from that is we would lessen greenhouse gas impact, climate change. So we would also be doing the climate a favour as well. So there's an opportunity to grow more locally.

On that, with agriculture I will highlight, I guess, cast a lens both provincially and also across my district and highlighting both fiscal management, red tape and some investment opportunities. I will do this somewhat in a fashion that I used to do as a young naval officer in going to the bridge to brief the captain. He would say to me, Paddock, give me the good and the bad.

So folks, I will give you the good, the bad and the ugly. First of all, the good. I echo what was done four days ago and this was a government news release providing funding for the Community Garden Support Program. That is a good initiative. However – there's always a however when we're looking at Liberal fiscal management – that funding, \$133,000 – \$40,000 less than, I would highlight, that what was provided to the British soccer team – that \$133,000 was at a maximum \$750 per eligible applicant. Now, those eligible applicants are across schools, communities, various organizations. That \$750 then would translate to, at a max, 177 applicants.

Schools, we have over 250. Communities, we have over 300 and then a multiple number of organizations. So if you look at it from that perspective, then I would give this program a D rating. It's just barely good. So there's room for improvement.

So how do we improve it? There's an opportunity to put more funding there to expand the capacity to grow food locally, to grow interest in growing food locally as well.

Now, where can that money come from? We learned today, during Question Period, that there is \$2 million in overpayment. So there's \$2 million out there. Why don't we just take 5 per cent of that, \$100,000 and we can nearly double what is going into this program? That's a good start.

What is bad out there, you say? Well, again, I come back to what the Member for Exploits has repeatedly said here in the House, how do we get more food and meat on the shelves across the province? One way he indicated in being able to do that was having a federally regulated abattoir.

There is no federally regulated abattoir here in the province. Ideally, that would be set up in Central Newfoundland so we have access from both ends. We have farms right now, cattle farms in Central, that are getting their cattle slaughtered in PEI. Again, we would be bringing that back to the province, providing an opportunity to have that done locally. Huge savings again for both those businesses and the end consumers here in the province.

Now you ask, how can we fund that? Well, again we come back to that \$2-million overpayment. If we take, say, roughly 50 per cent of that, a million, that's an opportunity for seed money to get this going. This needs to happen – this needs to happen. Again, we are the only province without this. We need to do this, given our geographical size, to be able to expand agricultural capacity in the province.

On the ugly side – and this is sad. I've talked to several farms in my area, some that are looking to grow and as they're looking to grow, they reach out to Crown Lands. I believe Crown Lands is supportive and then Crown Lands passes that file over to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, Kruger. Kruger then comes back with a bill to those farms for timber rights. In a way, that is somewhat extortion, expecting those small farms to have to pay that to be able to grow

local food production here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So how do we solve that? Why can't we go back to Kruger, a Quebec company who's taking their profits back to Quebec and say, for timber rights, those timber rights adjacent to farms in Newfoundland and Labrador, that want to expand, we will give you alternate places? There's one farm in my district where there is absolutely no rationale for Kruger to go in because it's on a secondary road. So it's really land locked for Kruger, yet Kruger still wants the timber rights. This must be done for the province. This must be done with regard to expanding local production.

With that, then we can also look at additional incentives for our small farms right across the province. We have a number of farms now that are looking to use hydroponics to expand. Actually in my district, we've got the chair of the Canadian Hydroponic Association. We need to look at all avenues to be able to grow food production across the entire province.

Now, one final thing that I will highlight is we are in a food crisis, cost-of-living crisis. So there's an opportunity again to come back to that \$2 million – I've only used 55 per cent of it so far – to take another 5 per cent or 10 per cent and distribute that funding to food banks across the province. We need to take the pressure –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: I was expecting cheering from the NDP on that one.

We need to look at every opportunity to be able to help ourselves. Helping ourselves comes back to, again, what I said from the beginning, our second established megaproject, agriculture, which is a reoccurring megaproject.

So folks, as I highlighted, I've only used 75 per cent of that \$2 million. I'll touch about the other 25 per cent later.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

I now recognize the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

P. PIKE: Thank you very much, Chair.

I'm very pleased to stand here today to represent the people of Burin - Grand Bank, and also the opportunity to speak about the important work our government is doing to support the seniors of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as to say how important that this Interim Supply bill is to us getting on with the great work that we're doing for the seniors in this province.

Seniors make significant contributions to our communities and they offer invaluable career experience. As we all know, seniors come from all walks of life. If you ever walk into a 50-plus club, you'll see that our seniors can pretty well do anything. If you're looking for a treasurer, a hand is up: I was an accountant for 30 years; I can do that no problem. Great leadership skills – if you need a window fixed or a leak fixed or whatever, there are seniors there that can do that. That's why our 50-plus clubs are so successful, and our other seniors' groups.

Across the province, our seniors are still working and making a great contribution to our businesses and so on in our communities and they're doing great work. As you know, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest percentage of seniors in Canada. Our seniors want to live safely, they want to enjoy good health and they want to remain active in their communities and feel like they're needed, and our government is committed to ensuring that they can.

As people age, our health care needs to change as well. Our government is taking the necessary steps to support our seniors so that they can remain active in their communities, live with dignity and have a quality of life.

To ensure seniors age in the right place, our government invested \$10 million in a comprehensive Seniors' Well-Being Plan. This, of course, was interdepartmental and provides essential financial, medical and social support for the seniors of the province. A grant program for low-income seniors to assist in services such as snow clearing and grocery deliver – big uptake on that, \$400 to help seniors get snow clearing, have groceries delivered and so on. Absolutely wonderful.

As a matter of fact, the threshold was also changed. We increased the threshold for seniors who were couples or seniors who were single, and that allowed a big uptake. Now, I guess you all noticed that your constituency offices got really busy around this time because so many people qualify. We were so pleased to be able to do that.

If you looked at the increased investments that we made in home repair and home modifications, that's very, very helpful. We have seniors that reach out every day, especially now, we're getting a lot for home modifications and that's so important. They may want to install new bathrooms and so on in their homes to make them more accessible – a great program.

We're getting a lot of seniors that, over a period of time, need shingles on their roofs, new windows, new doors and so on and we're able to do that as well. There's a big uptake on that as well. I'm sure you all have seniors in your offices, as your constituency assistants help those seniors fill out applications and so on, they're sent in and there's a fast turnaround on those. We're quite pleased with that as well. It's a good program.

We have an enhanced immune response for influenza vaccines for seniors 65 years and older; a \$500 grant for food and heating for seniors living in Coastal Labrador. It is certainly a great program as well, big uptake on that program. We're very pleased with it.

As well, the 211 services – I remember talking about the 211 services a while ago at a seniors' function in Marystown. I was surprised with the number of people who are actually using that to navigate through the various government departments. They really appreciate the 211. It's certainly something that is working.

As part of our commitment to strengthening the health care system, the Health Accord had recommendations across community care for long-term care and hospital settings. Our goal is to provide a spectrum of care all along those disciplines.

As people age, they may need services of a health care provider who specializes in the care for seniors. That's why we are establishing Centres of Excellence in Aging to provide optimal health care specialized for our seniors. A team approach to help care for our seniors can be effective in supporting seniors who have multiple health conditions and want to age healthy. We are enhancing the continuum of care for seniors by enhancing home and community care for less resilience, I should say, on institutional care.

In last year's budget, \$1.9 million to enhance dementia-inclusive environments in long-term care homes, including arrangements and opportunities to make long-term care homes more familiar and less institutional. An additional \$1.1 million for the Lionel Kelland Hospice, bringing the total commitment to \$2.3 million to provide quality palliative care and end-of-life care for people in a more family-centred setting.

Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars for nurse practitioners to support home dementia care. Many adults need to remain

healthy, active and independent at their age. They're socially engaged and most of them, or a lot of them, have their families around them. So that's why they want to remain in their own homes in their own communities.

Others may need additional supports to have this level of independence and to remain in their communities as active members. And a lot of talk today about home care workers and so on. Yes, there is an issue in getting home care workers. Not because of the fact that they're not being approved for home care, a lot of our seniors, but it's because they're difficult to get in communities. We're working through that and we're having a lot of success, especially when it comes to allowing family members to also be home care workers.

Our government is committed to building communities that promote healthy aging and social well-being. Over the past year, we've invested \$400,000 in the Alzheimer Society to support dementia-inclusive communities, \$200,000 for a seniors' inclusion initiative, which offers funding for seniors and older adults to participate in activities that promote healthy aging.

A \$95,000 grant for the age-friendly – I've talked about this before in the House, our age-friendly grants. They go a long way in helping our communities. They go a long way in helping our seniors be able to take part in events in our communities. A lot of the seniors use the walkabouts that were created through these programs and so on, common sitting areas where they can go and be with their friends and so on.

Our government recognizes these are challenging times for many seniors, especially those living with low income. To help the seniors, I have a list of things that we've done – and I only have a minute left, so I'll try to get through some of these. No new taxes or fee increases; we're continuing the 8.05 cent per litre reduction on the price of gas; a 50 per cent reduction

off the cost of registering passenger trucks and vehicles; maximizing free driver medical examinations for people 75 or older.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's pretty good.

P. PIKE: It is.

Continued removal of the 15 per cent retail tax on home insurance. Maintaining the Home Heating Supplement that provides up to \$500 to residents and seniors who rely on furnace oil or stove oil to heat their home. An increase of 15 per cent in the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement for seniors. The supplement benefits more than 150,000 families and individuals in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Increasing the Seniors' Benefit by 15 per cent which helps almost 50,000 seniors aged 65 or older.

CHAIR: Thank you.

P. PIKE: Thank you, Chair.

I have more to add.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to be able to speak on this Interim bill, a very important bill and like all my colleagues, we will be supporting the bill. We know how important this bill is to keep the operational needs of the province ongoing, from payroll, health care, transportation, whatever.

I'm going to keep this to a provincial level, Interim bill, we're talking about the provincial budget. We're not talking about Pierre Poilievre or Mark Carney. This is provincial and we're talking about an Interim Supply

bill, which has got nothing to do with the elections up in Canada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: When we talk about Future Fund, \$350-odd million into a Future Fund and we with a growing deficit like we've got; it doesn't make any sense to me.

You know, future means future and we're at a time right now where we need to use some of that monies to help out with our health care, help out with our seniors, with the high cost of living, with daycare workers. I'm a believer that we could be saving millions of dollars if we put more emphasis on home care for our seniors. Increase the pay in home care. Give the seniors a break on home care. Let them stay in their homes. Those long-term institutions cost us millions of dollars, unnecessary money and they're not getting the care that they should be getting, like they would in their own homes.

My emphasis would be on reducing the cost of the health care system by doing those kinds of moves; making those kinds of things happen. Our seniors would be quite happy that they'd be in their own homes. They'd be living a nice, comfortable, normal life and they could even die with dignity, which is not happening right now in some of those homes. In some of those homes, and I'm not blaming the workers that are there, I'm talking about the lack of resources. They haven't got enough staffing to deal with it and it's a crime to see the way – how some of those seniors are treated.

I know because I had my mother in here in a home and I knew how she was treated, and she didn't want to be here. It's only because she had a touch of dementia that we let her stay here.

Those are the kinds of things that we have to address and make this a better Newfoundland, not only a better district, a better Newfoundland and Labrador. We need to start thinking more positive than we

do. There are opportunities in this province which are unreal, secondary processing, small industries, small construction companies, like I said before, let's grow it, let's grow this province.

We could be putting billions of dollars more into the economy of this province, creating thousands of more jobs and growing this province population, as well. People have a reason to stay here and a reason to work here.

When we talk about fiscal management and budgetary control, I think, we're not steering the right route, from my perspective. I see other ways that we could increase money going into the economy, shrinking the deficit, not growing the deficit. Any budget, you have to try to control your budgets, and it comes into fiscal management.

Another thing I want to touch on with this Future Fund, I mean, we're lacking Wi-Fi and cellphone services, which is crucial to health care in this province, but we're not putting anything into it. Let's take some of those funds and put it in to help our seniors, help out with Wi-Fi and the cellphone services and get back on track here. We're off track in this province, big time and, you know, this has to change. If we want to make a better Newfoundland and Labrador, we have to get our heads together here, because we're just not focused. We have to be responsible and when you're asked a question, you should have to stand up and answer it, whether it be a lion or a – oh, I won't say the other word, but anyhow.

It's frustrating to see, you know, what we could be doing and keep the people in their homes. Our transportation system is in shambles. Our roads are not fit to drive on and when you talk about all those areas with the paving and the brush cutting, b'y I tell you, they're not in my district. There's not in my district and that's a safety issue. That's people's lives we're dealing with there by not cutting a bit of brush.

E. LOVELESS: You can't tell me there haven't been (inaudible).

J. MCKENNA: I'm telling you right now. Look, you had your turn.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

J. MCKENNA: You had your turn. You're at it the whole day over there, and I had enough. I don't know about anybody else, but I had enough.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: Respect somebody when he gets up to speak. Yes, you can jab your arm, it doesn't bother me; I'll tell you right now.

Now, if I can speak, I'll try and if it bothers you that much, well, you can leave the House if you want to, it doesn't bother me.

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, oh!

J. MCKENNA: You ask for respect on this side of the House, I heard it all day, and we even made a ruling on a couple things here, and you're allowed to do it, so, wonderful, wonderful.

But anyhow, I'm going to go back to health care, the money that we are putting into health care and not doing the right spending with it. And we're not putting any money into our seniors, with the high cost of living. And people on any fixed income, and seniors having to pay for medications that they can't afford to pay for. There are lots of things we can do to help out the people of this province.

If we want to talk about an Interim Supply bill and a budgetary process, those are the kinds of things we can take a more advanced look at, a more proactive look, if you want. Be more proactive. Let's see what we can do to improve. When you talk about

Transportation and Infrastructure, you're talking about some of your overpasses with the falling concrete down on the roadways. This day and age, for the lack of inspections?

Four years ago they knew that; four years later there's nothing done about it. What are we waiting for? Someone to get injured or someone to have a lot of damage done to their vehicles? So when talk about thinking ahead, we have to give our heads a shake, and we can't be always – this is not a joke. We're dealing with the taxpayers' dollars of this province and we're not being careful how we spend it? No, something's not right here. Something's not adding up here.

So until we –

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, oh!

J. MCKENNA: Excuse me?

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

We're almost done. Let's just –

J. MCKENNA: Be nice, be nice.

CHAIR: Order, please!

J. MCKENNA: Yeah, so we'll go back to the cost of living, as well. I mean, we could be subsidizing our seniors in some way, some how and we could probably be cutting the taxes off home heating, whether it be electricity, oil or whatever to help out our seniors. They're the vulnerable people of this province and we've got to show more respect for those people. Those are the people who worked so hard to put Newfoundland where it's to and we're not giving them anything back in return, just a slap in the face, as far as I'm concerned. No, that's wrong – that's wrong.

Those are the kinds of things that we have to sit down and get our heads around and

let's do better. Let's do better when it comes to health care; let's do better when it comes to home care; put more money into home care, let the seniors stay in their homes; put more money into the home care workers. Like I said, they're only a little bit above a dollar of the minimum wage and look at the responsibilities that they take on.

So if you want to keep people in their homes, which they should be allowed to stay in their homes, if they want to live there, this is the kind of thing we've got to do. We've got to put more of the emphasis on home care and affordability.

Like I say, the Future Fund, why not use the Future Fund for the seniors – the future of our seniors. When is the future? The future is tomorrow. The future is not yesterday and, you know, when you build up such a deficit and you've got a Future Fund there, it doesn't make sense, if we can't draw from that Future Fund and improve those services, it doesn't make sense. No, it doesn't make sense.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

I next recognize the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just going to stand and have a few words about some of the things that I spoke about today also. One thing that's coming up here is home care. I just wanted to bring it up to the government something that hasn't happened for a while.

When you get home care, you go through an agency. The last number of years, the agency has gotten increases. But when you self-administered it yourself, there's no

increase. So what's happening is that the agency say was getting \$100,000, over the years, now they're up to \$105,000, \$110,000 for a number of clients. If you self-administer, which in some cases is great because you can spread the money out further because you haven't got the administration and the company part, but there's no increase if you self-administer.

It's a big concern, especially in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I know I've got numerous calls on it because they can't get the workers, the company can't come in and get the workers so they go in the community and get the workers, and when you self-administer it, there's no increase for any self-administration. So I ask the minister if there's any way to get that changed in the budget so that if you self-administer, you'll get the same increase as a company because it's not happening right now.

What's happening is because of the cost, they can't get the workers because they can't pay them as much as the company who's getting the increase. I'm bringing that up on behalf of the people of the Humber - Bay of Islands that have brought it to my attention. I had several calls on it; many people have brought it to my attention.

When the government says that they're going to try to help our rural Newfoundland and seniors, here's a prime example of how you can do it: Treat self-administered home care the same as you would with a company.

I know the minister is attentively listening and I'm confident that something will be done with that. I will call back to people and say I did raise in the House of Assembly. Other Members did raise it in the House of Assembly also on the Opposition side, they did raise that same issue.

I'm just hoping that this budget will show that there will be an increase for our self-administration of home care for seniors who would ensure that they would get more

hours than less hours with the same pay up to five or six years ago that they're still using the same amount, because they don't get an increase on it. So I just want to raise that.

The other thing that I mentioned and I'll bring up again is the roads. What are we in March now, going into the middle of March and there's been no announcement on the roadwork for the province, absolutely none. Usually you have a big splash in January so you get the tenders out. A lot of the tenders now would be out and they'd be starting to bid on, but, right now, as we speak, there's no tenders being administered as usual and the amount of money that's going to be spent this year. You always here about the \$1.4 billion or \$1.5 billion that the government has for roadwork, yet, if you don't get the tenders out early and if you don't get the work started, our season is pretty short.

So what's going to happen – and I'll put it on the record here now – is that the government is ensuring a lot of this work will be carryover for next year because there are certain districts here who, I'm confident, is going to get some funding that don't want to have the announcement for it.

So this is what's happening here now and the budget that's going to be used for the money will be a carryover. If there's an election coming up and I happen to be lucky enough to get elected again, I'm going to stand up here and say I told you so because that's exactly what's happening here.

The reason why that's sad is we here on the Opposition side and myself and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands mentioned some issues there with safety in his own district, is that what's happening is you're delaying putting safety on the roads. It's plain and simple. Safety should be a priority and without putting the tenders out you're delaying making roads safe in our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's plain and simple.

Why they're doing it is because they're anticipating an election. They want to make a big splash on it; no election and they weren't prepared to put the tenders out. There will be some districts, I'm confident in the Opposition districts, and they don't want to have a big splash saying that you can go and put on your thing, here's the payment we're getting as an election issue.

It's sad. It's actually sad that this is happening because anybody can go back to the last three or four or five years and you can see when the announcements were made. This year it is not being done. It's going to be delayed and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are the ones that are going to suffer.

I'm going to bring up, again, another big issue is health care. I just can't keep it quiet on the concerns of the people of Western Newfoundland about health care. I know the government put out for the old Western Memorial Hospital they're going to put 45 beds. The Member for Corner Brook went out the day later and said what we need is a long-term care facility of the long term.

So were these 45 beds just to satisfy that there may have been an election coming up, when the actual need is for a long-term care facility.

These are the questions that are out in Corner Brook and the need for the long-term care beds was evident back in 2017, 2018. Actually, they were in there and whatever happened, it wasn't followed up. They were going to build some bungalows and it wasn't followed up.

There are a lot of other things taken out of the hospital, that's fine, too. That's another debate for another time, but the two long-term care facilities in Corner Brook right now are full. I don't know if we're going to get an update. They said six months to get the 45 beds ready in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital. I've been told, and a contractor says, they can do it much

quicker, do 20, 25 beds much quicker, move so many out, but you can't get an update, you actually can't get an update on the status of preparing that old Western Memorial Regional Hospital for the 45 beds.

I can tell you, and I'll say it again as many times until someone starts listening on the government side, the emergency department in Corner Brook is in a crisis. It's in a crisis. I've been saying it for a year and a half, two years, here's what's going to happen. It is in a crisis.

Then when you bring up about allowing the nurse practitioners to bill government, which would alleviate a lot of people having to go to the emergency department, it's just not done. For some reason, I just don't know why it's not done. Alberta could do it. They're in the same Canadian Health Act that we are, they can do it, but for some reason we want people in Western Newfoundland and Labrador to suffer, for some reason. I don't know what the reason is. With the stroke of the pen, it could be done, a stroke of the pen they can allow that. Yet, they're going to let a lot of people, mainly seniors, have to go up and sit in the emergency room, 14, 15, 16 hours to get a prescription filled, while there are other people there behind waiting, or just to go up and get some blood work and have to come back to get the results for blood work because they don't have a family doctor.

It is astonishing that hasn't been taken care of. I challenge everybody, every minister to come out to the emergency department in Corner Brook, if you think it's just me, come out to the emergency department yourselves, I'll even arrange the meetings, to sit down and listen to some of the concerns. I'll even arrange the meetings. That is how much suffering is going on and we can help with that suffering.

When you hear about all the things that have been done about this 811, probably it does help a lot of people, but I know a lot of people that I've spoken to, all they're told is:

listen to your concern for 10 or 15 minutes, go on to an emergency department. That's what they're told.

A Family Care Team in Corner Brook was supposed to be set-up three years ago now: none, absolutely none. Family doctors are leaving. You heard one family doctor who left and said they can't compete against the government giving bonuses to other doctors in the facilities while they have to go out and start their business, pay their rent, pay their staff and that, yet they can go out and build up, and family doctors are leaving because of that, they can't afford it.

It's an easy fix. It's an actual easy fix to help out with people in Western Newfoundland. I say to the government – I see the Chair is telling me time is up – go out and meet with people and find out how things –

CHAIR: Thank you to the Member.

Any further speakers to the bill?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Chair.

I want to talk a little bit about tariffs and the issue, I guess, with the United States. I know that the provincial government have taken some measures, which I do agree with and appreciate, of course, but there are a few things I just wanted to sort of add to that conversation about dealing with the US.

First of all, I notice that – this is more of a symbolic thing than anything else, I suppose – the College of the North Atlantic, they came out with a statement, I think it was last week, they shut down X. The College of the North Atlantic is no longer on X because, of course, it's owned by Elon Musk. So I just put it over to the government for consideration, maybe we should get off X as well. The provincial government: get off X.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: Why are we supporting Elon Musk with X with all of our government accounts? Bluesky is out there. It's a different company not owned by Elon Musk, I don't think. Go with Bluesky.

I also want to just mention procurement is a big one. I know that the government buys a lot of stuff and I know the Premier had indicated to me when I had chatted with him a while back that the government are looking at making some changes to the procurement rules to allow for more local products, Canadian products and so on, to see how much more flexibility we can build into it so that we're buying Canadian, buying Newfoundland and Labrador products through government procurement, which I absolutely agree with. I think we should've been doing it long before now, but we are doing it. That's a good thing.

But I wonder about our agencies, boards and commissions, it's just a question, I guess, more so than anything else, to the Minister of Finance about agencies, boards and commissions. Has the government gone to agencies, boards and commissions, gone to College of the North Atlantic, gone to Memorial University and so on and told them that they have to do the same thing? Do not buy any products from the US. Do not avail of any services from the US. Buy Canadian, buy local wherever we can, and if we have an alternative beyond that, buy it over in Europe somewhere. Do not buy from the United States. Have agencies, boards and commissions been told the same thing?

I said to the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs: Have you reached out to municipalities? I know the City of Mount Pearl, because they have it on their Facebook site and their website, they've put it out there that they're going to try to do their part to support buy Newfoundland, buy Canadian, which is a good thing that's proactive on their part. Has the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, perhaps through MNL, reached out to MNL, reached out to municipalities and told and asked

them to get on board through their procurement not to buy from the US, to buy Canadian, to buy Newfoundland and Labrador products and, again, in the alternative to that, buy it from Europe somewhere, do not buy it from the US?

Travel is another one. I know that there's going to be travel, obviously, which I agree with. If we want to diversify our markets, then we're going to have to participate in trade missions and so on. No issues there. I do understand the importance of why we kind of need to be at the Boston Seafood Show, albeit the thoughts of us sending anyone down to the US right now just in principle I don't really agree with, but I understand that particular one.

But there's a lot of travel that goes on: agencies, boards and commissions, Memorial University, College of the North Atlantic, municipalities – a lot of municipalities, councillors and so on from all municipalities across the province go to conferences every year. Have they been encouraged, asked, so on, to ban US travel, that's unnecessary travel? They do it for professional development and so on, which is all good, but if there are professional development opportunities, do them in Canada, don't do them in the US.

I know there are a lot of municipalities and profs and so on through MUN and all that kind of stuff that are going on these conferences down in the United States. We should be reaching out to them and saying to them: Please, do not travel to the US. Ban all conferences in the US. Obviously, if it's something that – I don't know, if you're a specialist or something and you have to go to a – if you're an engineer and there's a specific conference that you have no choice to go to in order to keep your licence or something, I don't know if that's even a thing, but if it is, fair enough.

But if it's something that you can avoid travel to the United States, let's put something out to the municipalities, to the

agencies, boards and commissions, to the university, to the health care authorities: No travel to the US for any reason. Stay out of there.

I'm not sure if we're doing that, that's why I'm putting it out. Maybe the government are already doing that. If they are, great, but I don't think they are.

I wonder about this office that we're going to set up in Boston. I think it was Boston. Is that cancelled? I hope that's off the table. I hope to God I don't look at the budget and see a budget line for an office in Boston this year. It better not be in the budget. I hope it's not.

We were going to set up an office in Boston; to have a presence in Boston for the US. I hope we're not going to be there. I hope we're not going to be there. If it's there, I'm really asking the Minister of Finance, if there's a budget line in your budget for us to open up an office in Boston, take it out of the budget, please. Please, take it out of the budget.

We can't be talking out of both sides of our mouth. We're either on board for this or we're not on board for this. We either agree with the ban or we don't agree with the ban. We're either against what Donald Trump is trying to do to our country, and hence our province, or we're not.

It's not good to go and come here and wear this silly little button – I've got no problem with the button, I'm just saying – wear a silly little button, do a thing on the news here, you know, take some liquor off the shelves for sale; we're standing up for Canada. Then, at the same time, we're going to have people travelling down to the States for conferences left, right and centre, and we're not going to be cutting our spending on US products and we're not going to be reaching out to our municipalities, to our universities, to our ABCs and telling them to do the same thing? Then this symbolic gesture is just a joke, if we're not doing that stuff.

Certainly, if we're going to be opening up an office in Boston, of all places, that definitely would be a joke. I hope that that's, again, not going to happen. Same thing when it comes to, not just the purchase of goods, but certainly when it comes to contracts and so on for US-based companies.

We took an initiative that was through the federal government – we sort of jumped on board, but we had an initiative there a while back about cutting the GST. We didn't pay GST for two or three months and so on. If you went out to a restaurant and so on, there was no GST. Maybe a suggestion is we cut the GST on Canadian restaurants, for example, Canadian only. I think A&W is Canadian and Harvey's. I think they're the only two. Tim Horton's. Beyond that they're all US companies. Look, our economy is much better off if someone went down to Leo's Fish and Chip instead of went to McDonald's. Reality, you know, so these are things we could be doing as well.

The other point I had there, and I don't even know if this is a thing but I'm not sure, maybe that's federal. I'm not sure how it works in terms of charging fees to vessels when they're tying up at the wharves and stuff when someone comes into St. John's Harbour and so on. Can we be taxing US vessels every time they pull in and they tie up to the wharf? They're going to pay some kind of a fee or a levy to – I don't know if that would be the provincial government or the federal government. Probably the federal government. But we have a lot of boats coming and going around Newfoundland and Labrador, they should be paying.

The other thing, of course, and this has been brought up and this was a big one I had here as well, is our ferry to Nova Scotia. We want people now to stop travelling to the US, they have to have options. If they want to keep travelling in Canada, we need options. I would say an impediment to travel in and out of Newfoundland and Labrador is that Marine Atlantic ferry. I think it would be

a great investment for our – maybe it would be a great investment for this summer, particularly while we're in this trade war – maybe someone should reach out to Marine Atlantic and just let's cut the fees in half or something. Maybe waive the fees, I don't know, for the summer so that we can get people travelling to and from the Island and keep them out of Florida, keep them out of the US altogether.

These are just some of the things, some of the notes, I just wrote down and some of the things we can do. But at the end of the day, it comes down to if we're serious about supporting our own economy and banning the US, then we have to go all the way.

Thank you.

And God love (inaudible).

CHAIR: Thank you.

Seeing no further speakers, shall clause 1 carry?

Oh, sorry, the hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: (Inaudible) just a few and I'm going to talk about a lot of stuff I already talked about, Mr. Chair.

It's always a privilege to stand up here on behalf of the people of Humber - Bay of Islands to speak about the concerns that are brought to my attention.

If I don't, where there's an opportunity to stand up here and speak, if I miss that opportunity then you're almost like sitting the concerns that they have, and I will talk about a lot of their concerns. I may not go to 10 minutes, but they are real concerns.

Again, I go back to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board was talking about the tariffs. Tariffs are serious; it's going to affect the Bay of Islands in the fisheries. The fisheries itself in Humber -

Bay of Islands is a big employer. There are three plants in the district, a lot of fisherpeople and a lot of boat owners; it will affect those individuals a lot.

Again, to try to get other markets and try to get new markets for the fisheries for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and for the people of Humber - Bay of Islands, is a positive sign. I support that 100 per cent. I understand that their may be even some trade missions that are going outside in new areas to try to find new markets and I can only wish them all the best and support it because a lot of families depend on the fisheries in the Humber - Bay of Islands area and the spin-off effects, the spending in the stores and the shops in the Humber - Bay of Islands.

Again, I'm reaching out saying if there's anything I can do to spread the word to the people who are involved with the fisheries in Humber - Bay of Islands, I definitely will work with the government to do that and support in any way possible, the fisheries in the Humber - Bay of Islands. It's something that a lot of people are after calling me already on their concerns about that. I know the government is looking at other options and other avenues to look for markets and I can only applaud that and work with them.

Mr. Chair, I'm also going to speak again about health care. I know people are going to say, well, you're talking about health care again. I stand up every time that I speak about health care. The reason why I speak about it is because it's so serious. I just cannot give up the opportunity to have another option to bring up to government on the concerns of the Corner Brook regional hospital lack of doctors, lack of access to health care in the region and it's very, very important.

Many people and I send a lot of concerns, I get permission from the people, I send them to the ministers. They're getting it first-hand from the people who are suffering at the hospital. They're getting it because I'm

sending it to them. They know it. They know the concerns. They know how many people are waiting out in the hallways because there's no beds. They know that. They're getting it.

They know when you're out there and you put one of those collapsible screens and you can put a commode there and you're in the middle of a hallway while people walking back and forth in a commode. It's real. It's real. For some reason, it took almost a year, they finally said: Well, we have a problem here. We have a problem so we're going to have to do something with the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital, when if you had to start that back when you knew the problem a year and a half ago, it would be a lot less pressure, a lot less stress on the health care workers and the patients themselves.

I have to say, from first-hand experience, once you get in to the long-term care facility or into the new Western Memorial Regional Hospital, the staff are great. You get treated with professional care all throughout. But getting in is the problem because of the lack of beds.

I asked for updates and I can't get any updates on the status of the 45 beds to date. I still haven't got an update. They said six months. I was told that they can do 20 beds much quicker than six months, yet you can't get an update.

This is the concern that a lot of people have. They go out and they make an announcement that we're going to set up 45 beds and people are saying, well, when are they going to be ready? Up to six months, maybe seven, maybe eight. I don't know who is responsible for the PR for the government and health care now, but it would be nice to give people some encouragement, some update.

Coming out and making an announcement and saying here's what we're doing and no updates to say, yes, the work is

progressing. Yes, here's where we're at. Yes, the timeline is six months or maybe five months, four months. Yet you can't get an answer, while people are still in that emergency department, still waiting 16, 18, 20 hours, still put into a closet in the nighttime because there are no rooms and because people are coming into work in the morning, you have to go back out in the hallways.

This is not what that new Western Memorial Regional Hospital was supposed to be. The crown jewel, of course, was the radiation so people didn't have to travel. I was on a local media story there a couple of weeks ago and people saying, well, can you increase the bonuses, the funding? My point on that – and I'm going on memory and I'm pretty sure, it's pretty accurate – there will be right now 300 to 400 people that will be travelling to St. John's for radiation.

If you just calculate that, what it costs on the travel budget for people and the government, even if you increase the bonuses – for some reason, if that's the issue, the bonuses – even if you increase it \$100,000, \$200,000 to get it, you'd still be saving money with the travel. That's not calculated into any bonuses because the bonuses are for anybody in the province. But as Corner Brook is classified as rural, anything outside of St. John's is classified as rural, if you don't increase somehow, then it's going to be hard to find a radiation oncologist. But if you increase it and you're going to save on the travel budget, it's a saving in the government and, plus, there's a radiation oncologist in Corner Brook to give the services at home.

We always hear that we're still recruiting, we're still recruiting, and I know it's difficult. This should have been started four, five, six years ago. I know it's difficult but we have to find some way to get that facility in Corner Brook to use to its potential. The crown jewel of the new Western Memorial Regional Hospital was radiation oncologists, so people could have radiation at home.

That was the crown jewel in that Western Memorial Regional Hospital.

Then again, I mentioned the roads on numerous occasions, and I just hope that someone is going to explain why the tenders aren't being put out now so we can get the work done the summer. I have yet to get an answer to that. I brought up to the government, and I know the minister was listening, about the self-administered home care. I'm hoping in the budget that there's going to be an increase for people who use the self-administered program. Because what happens, I'll say it again, is that if you don't increase that, hours will start decreasing because they can't keep up with the pay. Once you start decreasing the hours, that's less time spent on the seniors, or whoever it is that's going to be with the home care.

When we talk about helping seniors out, this is one way, especially in rural, because I know in many cases in the rural parts, the businesses cannot get anybody to work there, so they have to go around the community and get someone from the community to help out and pay them. When you see all other wages going up and you see – even the people who do the books for home care, their wages haven't moved in five or six years but who owns the businesses, the actual companies, they get extra. But the people who do the books for self-administration have not got a raise in a number of years. The self-administration program where people can take families so they can get more hours and they sometimes try to do the books themselves, yet they don't get an increase so they can keep the workers with the pay.

So I ask the minister to seriously give that a consideration for this budget because it's a real issue and what happens is a lot less –

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. Member's time has expired.

I now recognize the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Chair.

This will be my last one.

Chair, I, too, just wanted to bring up a lot of what my colleague said as it relates to health care, because it's important that we get the issues out that people are bringing to our attention. Probably, I would say, bar none, that's probably the biggest issue that I get from my constituents is health care. I would say everybody in this House of Assembly are probably in the same boat. I'd be surprised if health care is not the number one issue for every MHA in this House of Assembly.

I certainly empathize with my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands but I think it's important to note – and I know that rural Newfoundland and Labrador has its own set of challenges, over and above what you're going to have here in the St. John's metro area, no doubt about it. I do not diminish those issues and I'm not saying that in some cases, in some of the rural areas they have greater challenges than we have here. I absolutely acknowledge that, and it shouldn't be.

It's also important to note that things are not rosy here on the Avalon here either. Quite frankly, they are exacerbated by the lack of service in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It's actually exacerbated because of that. So when my colleagues are talking about issues, whether it be at the Hugh Twomey centre, whether it be in Bonavista, Clarendville and so on, there is a domino effect to that because the lack of service that they're receiving over there is downloading on the people in this region.

Now, God love them, they're entitled to it, 100 per cent. I'm not knocking that in any way because we're all taxpayers and we're all entitled to health care and other services. That's the reality is that when the issues are

not addressed in the rural parts of the province, then it all gets downloaded, if you will, on the urban part of the province. That's not the only thing that's causing problems here, but that's definitely a part of the issue. Without a doubt, that's a part of the issue.

I can tell you, there's hardly a day goes by, Mr. Chair, that I do not receive a call or get a message or two or three or five, sometimes, or more from people on issues around health care. The wait times that my colleague was talking about here in the Corner Brook hospital, no different at St. Clare's, no different at the Health Science. There are people at the Health Sciences Centre, same thing. They go there and they could there for 10, 12, 14, 18, 24 hours, people out on stretchers in the hallways for a day, two days at a time. It's happening.

You go over to the Health Sciences there now and I would not be surprised you're going to see a load of ambulances that are lined up. You go and they're in the hallway – and they're not allowed to say red alert any more, but the ambulances are off the road, it is a red alert because when they take a patient into the Health Sciences, by way of example, there's no one to hand the patient off to. They're not allowed to leave the patient until the doctor or the nurse or whoever it is in the emergency department sort of signs off or whatever it is they have to do. There's a protocol where I have to hand the care of this patient now over to the person at the hospital. It's not happening. So then they end up with all these issues with no ambulances on the road, which is a big problem.

I don't know if it was always the case. I don't think it was always the case. But I'm hearing on the regular, like, if you're here in St. John's – I don't know if every Member realizes it, maybe you do – if you're down in the East End of St. John's now and you call for an ambulance, there's a good chance that ambulance could be coming from Harbour Grace or Whitbourne or Avondale

or somewhere like that. That's happening, like, daily. That's now a normal occurrence.

I've had people come to me who had serious situations and had to wait an hour for an ambulance to come, people that were waiting so long that eventually they had to get a neighbour or whatever and try to load the person aboard of a car and get them to the emergency because they could not wait any longer for an ambulance. That's happening every day, and it's not fear mongering. It's not trying to paint a negative picture; it's just trying to paint a realistic picture.

I'm not saying that it's anybody's fault. I'm certainly not blaming anybody on this side or that side of the House, to be honest with you. There are a whole lot of factors that have contributed to this and have caused this, no doubt about it, a lot of external factors. I'm not suggesting otherwise. But it is a crisis. It really is indeed a crisis. There are so many people, not just in Western Newfoundland, but around here as well – I've got lots of constituents that don't have a family doctor, and they're into that same issue.

My colleague earlier talked about a senior having to go out to the clinic and show up two hours earlier and sit out or stand out in the cold, outside of Lawtons Drugs or something up here on Topsail Road for like two hours, waiting for the doors to open to hope that if I'm here quick enough, I can get to the door and get an appointment for that day. Then they've got to wait all day to get their appointment. That's what we're doing to our seniors. Now, I know nobody wants to do that. Nobody wants to do it, but that's what's happening.

My colleagues also right about 811. We're spending a fortune. I can remember – it seems to me maybe last year whenever that I think the Official Opposition or someone did some ATIPPs or something and we got the cost. But there were costs – I don't remember the numbers, but it was like an

astronomical number that we're paying for 811 – a huge number. The reality of it is that when you call 811, nine times out of 10 they're going to tell you to go to the emergency.

And I understand, because if someone says I have a pain or whatever, they might think it's nothing to it, but they're not going to put themselves in a liability situation. Same as if you called the Janeway. Anyone got kids – I know when my kids were young and now our grandkids, if you call the Janeway and you're saying she's not eating or they have a fever or they have this or have that, every single time you call, bar none, they'll say it's probably just this, but you should bring them to the emergency to get checked out, because there's a liability issue of course. And 811, for the most part, is the same thing. We're paying a fortune for someone, for the most part, to tell someone to go to the emergency department. That's what's happening.

Maybe that's not what was intended to happen. Maybe that's not what the government thought was going to happen, but that's the reality of what is happening. And there are no easy answers. There are no easy answers, I acknowledge that.

The Minister of Health, the government cannot knit doctors. I get that – I get that. And if the government changes tomorrow the new government wouldn't be able to knit doctors either. Now, are there more things that could be done in terms of recruitment, retention and so on? Perhaps so.

I've heard from doctors. I've talked about them before and I've heard from one and I actually forwarded him directly on to the Premier there last week about a particular doctor and a colleague of his, both born and raised in Newfoundland, wanted to work in Newfoundland, and now they're gone because they couldn't even get a call back from the health authority. Numerous calls, messages sent to the health authority saying I'm here, hey, hey, I'm here, hire me.

Couldn't even get a return phone call. There's a problem, I'm telling you. I'm telling you now, there's definitely a problem with our recruitment process. I'm not saying who's at fault and who's not. There are issues with MUN, too, with this practice-ready assessment thing. There are issues with the college and the communication between the college and MUN and the recruitment office.

Something is not gelling, properly, I'm telling you now. It is not gelling properly. There are issues and we are turning away doctors who want to work here. It's happening. Someone needs to get in there, roll up their sleeves, figure out what's going on and fix it. They really do. It is a problem, and it is leading to the bigger problem.

If people don't have family doctors to go to, then what choice do they have? They go to the emergency; they have no choice. They have to go somewhere. So they're blocking up the emergency rooms.

I think it's important to always keep health care at the top of mind, not in an accusatory way or a blameworthy way. I know that all Members know it's an issue, but we have to keep it up there. We have to keep that at the top because if you haven't got your health, you have nothing and everybody deserves decent health care and right now they're not getting it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

Seeing no further speakers, shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service." (Bill 105)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Against?

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 to 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 4 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

CLERK: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Against?

Carried.

On motion, the Schedule carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Against?

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the Public Service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2026 and for other purposes relating to the Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Against?

Preamble is carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Against?

It's carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the resolution and Bill 105 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Against?

Carried.

Motion, the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 105 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: It is moved and seconded –

L. DEMPSTER: Seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

CHAIR: – that the Committee rise and report this resolution carried without amendment.

Is it the pleasure of this Committee to adopt that motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Against?

It's carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville and Chair of the Committee of Supply.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Committee of the Whole on Supply have directed the matters to them referred and have directed me to report they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole on Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed them to report that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect of the same.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: *“Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2026 the sum of \$3,949,634,900.”

On motion, resolution read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: Second reading of the resolution.

“Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2026 the sum of \$3,949,634,900.”

On motion, resolution read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce the Interim Supply bill, Bill 105 and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 105, the Interim Supply bill, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, “An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service,” carried. (Bill 105)

CLERK: A bill, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 105)

On motion, Bill 105 read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the

Interim Supply bill be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 105)

On motion, Bill 105 read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the Interim Supply bill be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 105)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 105)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that this House do now stand in recess until 6:30 p.m.

SPEAKER: This House do stand in recess until 6:30 p.m. this evening.