



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

---

Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 109

---

HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

Thursday

April 10, 2025

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Order, please!

Admit visitors.

Before we begin this afternoon I'd like to welcome in the public gallery Gaylynn Gulliver, Marketing, Special Events and Public Relations Manager with Downtown St. John's. She's visiting us this afternoon for a Member's statement.

Welcome.

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

**SPEAKER:** Also in the public gallery, I'd like to welcome Kaiden Crocker. Kaiden is joined by his father and coach, Ian Crocker. They're also being recognized this afternoon for a Member's statement.

Welcome.

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

**SPEAKER:** I welcome everyone else in the galleries.

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today, we'll hear statements from the hon. Members from Stephenville - Port au Port, Exploits, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi and Topsail -Paradise.

The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

The multi-talented, 14-year-old David Walsh of Stephenville is a young rising star in the music and theatre world. In 2024, David won the Junior Rose Bowl competition at the Corner Brook Rotary Music Festival. Last year, he also won his first Rose Bowl at the Stephenville Rotary Music Festival and, just this past month, he claimed it again, two years in a row.

David has competed nationally for the past two years at the Canadian Federation of Music Festivals in both vocal and musical theatre. He earned a Platinum Standard – 95 or above – in musical theatre and once again has been recommended for nationals in both categories this year.

In addition to his solo work, David was part of the Atlantic Boychoir, performing in England and France. He is also a dedicated student of Nomad Stages arts studio in Stephenville, where he trains year-round in musical theatre and dance.

David's passion, focus and stage presence continue to earn him recognition and awards. At such a young age, he is already making a name for himself both locally and nationally, and his journey is just getting started.

Congratulations, David, we can't wait to see what you do next.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

Today, I would like to recognize and honour a hockey legend from Bishop's Falls, Mr. Alex Faulkner.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Alex was truly a dynamic hockey player and the first player from our province to play in the NHL in 1962. He played with the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Detroit Red Wings. He also played in the AHL and WHL.

Speaker, in 1963, Alex played in the Stanley Cup finals. He had an outstanding career as a hockey player and was the best from the blueline to the net. There was no better hockey player than Alex Faulkner. He was a

Hall of Fame athlete and excellent in other various sports.

Alex is also remembered as a very successful businessman in Central Newfoundland upon his retirement from hockey.

Speaker, I would like for all Members of the House of Assembly to join me in remembering Mr. Alex Faulkner and send sincere condolences to all his family and friends.

Keep your stick on the ice.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Speaker, I stand to acknowledge the great work of the Downtown Safety Coalition, established in 2022, to address complex issues of safety in the downtown core of St. John's.

The coalition includes representatives from the George Street Association, City of St. John's, Destination St. John's, HNL, MusicNL, the RNC and provincial government. They meet regularly to discuss shared experiences, perspectives and to find solutions to ongoing safety issues.

The coalition's objectives are to increase safety and improve visitors' experience in the downtown core. In the past year, the coalition hired and deployed private security patrols in the downtown area. This foot patrol provides support to people visiting and working, including the businesses that operate there. They work in co-operation and consultation with the RNC but are not intended as a replacement for the RNC, rather as additional security in the community.

Having this additional security presence on patrol helps deter unlawful behaviour while supporting those who might be in need. Finally, they operate as ambassadors for the downtown welcoming and informing visitors.

Speaker, I ask this House to join me in recognizing the Downtown Safety Coalition for their continued impact and success in making the downtown a viable centre of activity for shopper and visitor alike.

Thank you.

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

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

**P. DINN:** Speaker, 13-year-old Kaiden Crocker, a Taekwondo athlete from Paradise, has been training since he was three years old in World Taekwondo. Kaiden is passionate about his sport both inside and outside the ring. He assists young athletes, helping out at his club and volunteering at sports-sponsored events.

Though he is dedicated to training, putting in five sessions per week, he understands the value of a good education. Diligent in his school work, he maintains a GPA of over 90 per cent. Kaiden sets a positive example, not only for the students at Samjae Taekwondo, but to all aspiring Taekwondo athletes in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This past few years he has trained hard and demonstrated a fierce determination. In February, his efforts paid off at the 2025 Canadian national Taekwondo championships in Montreal where he succeeded in becoming the first Newfoundlander and Labradorian to obtain a spot on Team Canada and represent his country at the taekwondo Pan American Games that took place this past week in Mexico.

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

**P. DINN:** It is with great pride that I also congratulate Kaiden on bringing home the silver medal for Canada.

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

**P. DINN:** Mr. Speaker, I ask all to join me in congratulating Kaiden, and wish him all the continued success.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

This week we celebrate National Tourism Week, recognizing the significant role tourism plays in Newfoundland and Labrador. With the theme Canada: Powered by Tourism, this week highlights how vital this industry truly is.

Tourism is a key economic driver, contributing over \$1.4 billion to our economy, providing employment for thousands of people and creating significant benefits for our communities. Nationally, tourism creates one in 10 jobs, infusing the Canadian economy with more than \$100 billion in expenditure.

Tourism operators play a critical role in sharing our unique story, culture and heritage, not just with international visitors but also with Canadian travellers. Their efforts enhance local experiences, support cultural and recreational assets, enriching both the visitor experience and the quality of life for our residents.

Thank you to Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, Destination Management Organizations, the Newfoundland Labrador

Indigenous Tourism Association and the Newfoundland and Labrador Outfitters Association for their dedication in promoting and supporting tourism throughout our province.

Speaker, let us continue to prioritize and support tourism and travel, ensuring that Newfoundland and Labrador remains a top bucket-list destination for both Canadian and international visitors.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Tourism is certainly a key economic driver here in our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the tourism operators are the engines to create over a billion dollars in our economy annually. These operators create critical employment opportunities in many of our rural communities where other opportunities may not exist. They ensure that our visitors capture the true unique culture, heritage and local experience of this place we all call home. They highlight our physical beauty through our trails, harbours and bays, and end their day tasting some of our local traditional cuisine.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, our Destination Management Organizations, Newfoundland and Labrador Indigenous Tourism Association and the Newfoundland and Labrador Outfitters Association for their continued dedication in displaying our tourism potential to the country and the world. Let us continue to be powered by tourism.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

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

We recognize how important tourism is. I understand how important tourism is. I sat on Gateway Labrador for years and I understand the importance of it to the economy. But, unfortunately, there are barriers that prevent all regions from taking advantage of opportunities in this growing industry.

That's why I want to express disappointment that in this budget there was no money or anything set aside to work on interprovincial air travel. Tourists and locals alike cannot benefit across the province if they cannot get around this province.

Thank you.

**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.

Speaker, \$200 million was bookmarked in Interim Supply as a contingency fund for the impact of tariffs in this province. Yesterday it was reannounced in the budget.

I ask the minister: Can the minister provide details of the incentives that this fund will be used for?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

**G. BYRNE:** That was a great budget.

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

The \$200 million has been set aside, as the Member opposite knows, we discussed it at length during the Interim Supply debate. I will say to the Member opposite that there is a lot of volatility. You know that every day something new happens on the global stage, and we are monitoring, we are remaining diligent in understanding what's happening to our economy, what's happening to the global economy, and we'll take measures that are required should we have and when we have impacts on the economy due to these tariffs.

I will say that we are guided by the community leaders, union leaders and business leaders who are telling us some of those impacts. So we'll be guided by them as the time draws near.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

Part of the opportunity here is to streamline some of our own processes internally. We've been hearing from businesses and Chambers of Commerce that there are lots of things that could be done now that would help them in developing their businesses and getting them to open sooner and faster. So I think those are the things I'm trying to get at, where are we to with some of these initiatives when we talk about eliminating barriers.

Speaker, yesterday the minister bragged about a 13 per cent drop in non-urgent MRI wait times in the Eastern-urban zone.

So I ask the minister: Why are we only hearing about improvements in the metro area? Where are the stats for the rest of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

That's just part of the success of the investments that we've made. If he wishes to look across the province, then I would suggest we could start with 75,000 people who are now through Patient Connect and rostered with Family Care Teams.

There are still more to go. Those people who have registered with Patient Connect, but not yet been rostered, now have access to virtual care. So I'd use this forum to suggest to anybody who is out there who has not registered yet with Patient Connect and doesn't have a family doctor that it would be a good idea to do so. It would give them access to virtual care while they are waiting. The successes continue.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, let me talk about the 163,000 people who still do not have access to a primary care provider.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** And while the stats may be great here in the urban area, they're not great in the rest of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. So let's get that fixed, and let's talk about nurse practitioners. Why are we still paying for nurse practitioners? That wasn't addressed yesterday in the budget.

But again, it's about sugar-coating the numbers. This Liberal government has forgotten everyone outside the overpass. Just one mention of rural Newfoundland and Labrador in the entire Budget Speech.

So I ask the minister of rural economic development: Is this government's plan for rural NL to quietly shut the lights off and walk away?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**S. COADY:** What a misconception of a 70-minute Budget Speech, Mr. Speaker. Honest to goodness.

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

**S. COADY:** Did he not listen to the amount of money that we're putting into economic development? We talked about restaurants. Are there no restaurants outside the Avalon peninsula, I ask the Member opposite?

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

**S. COADY:** We talked about technology yesterday in the budget; there's money for technology. Is there no technology around this province? Of course there is, Mr. Speaker.

I would say to the Member opposite that he go back and read that Budget Speech, analyze it and understand that there are significant investments not only for the Avalon peninsula, but for every region in this province, because this government supports economic development and growth in all areas of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, I read the budget, and when I looked at it, what did it

contain for cost-of-living initiatives? What did it contain when it comes to access to healthcare? We didn't see anything there. I've also talked to rural development associations in rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, who have sent in proposals, and haven't even gotten the respect to get a response back about the things that they're looking for. That's just not good enough right now.

Speaker, one Officer of the House, the Auditor General, has raised serious finding in an audit of personal care homes in this province. Another Officer of the House, the Seniors' Advocate, says she isn't surprised by the findings of the Auditor General's recent report. To quote her: Families have been pointing out these issues for years.

Why is this Liberal government simply saying that this is a communications issue?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

Unfortunately, the Member opposite again kind of misrepresents the statements that have been put out there. Firstly, let me say that there is no acceptable number of serious incidents – none at all. Those that were identified in the AG's report, each of them was dealt with promptly and appropriately and, where appropriate, law enforcement was involved.

We have worked over the last six years to improve the situation with respect to standards. We have been remiss at publishing for the public; however, they have been out there for the personal care home operators to see and use, and for NLHS, who are responsible for monitoring and supervising.

We put in 17 new FTEs to aid supervision and assessment of patients in personal care homes, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, it's great to hear the minister stand up. And last week they couldn't decide upon whether or not it was their responsibility or whether it was the health authority's responsibility. These are things that were actually quoted in the media.

The Auditor General states that these issues go back a decade to 2015. So we have the Minister of Municipal Affairs who was the Health minister for most of the past decade, we have two leadership candidates, one who was most recently the minister of Health, and the other who was a deputy minister of Health back in 2015.

Why are these leadership candidates refusing to speak to this issue, and why has the Liberal government not provided proper oversight for families and seniors for the last decade?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

We have provided oversight through NLHS. That is their role, that is their mandate to provide oversight.

In 2020, we initiated a program whereby every home would have one announced inspection and one unannounced inspection each month. That has continued through COVID and you've seen the success we had there compared with other jurisdictions in terms of the health and well-being of seniors in personal care homes.

That continues. We have added 17 full-time equivalents who are responsible through the NLHS for monitoring and assessing homes.

And we'll continue to work on the standards as we get to them, one at a time.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

The personal care home sector is a valuable part of our health care system. We have great operators; we have great staff and they're providing quality care to our seniors. Speaker, food inspections, school bus inspections and child care inspections are all published online, yet the personal care homes that care for our seniors and loved ones are not.

I ask the minister: Why aren't these reports made public?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

This is something we are going to do; I said that last week and the week before. In actual fact, Mr. Lane from the personal care homes and operators' association is onboard with that.

It is entirely reasonable that these reports of compliance are published, but equally I think it's important to highlight those homes that are compliant. This is not everyone's story, and this is a fact that has been brought to my attention by residents of personal care homes who are worried that somehow their home is brought into disrepute by these kind of things.

The Member has raised a good point. The Auditor General has raised it. We acknowledge it and we're going to do it.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

They should be made public and recommendations made in 2015, we shouldn't be 10 years later still talking about the same recommendations with the same minister in charge.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, the president of the Nurses' Union has responded to the budget by saying government – quote – missed the mark.

What in this budget specifically addresses the verbal and physical abuse nurses continue to face on the job?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I was somewhat surprised at the president's remarks, bearing in mind that she had been briefed, as all of the stakeholders had, on the contents of the budget; that she actually omitted a lot of the things that we were talking about in the budget.

There is money there for internationally educated nurses; she said there wasn't. There's \$2.3 million. She said that we were not interested in recruitment and retention; we have 760 new RNs in this province. The vacancy rate in RNs has gone from 750, 18 months ago, to 300. We have 246 student nurses graduating this year and 222 of them have been offered, and accepted, full-time employment.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Once again, the architect of our health care crisis is in another alternate universe, because everyone else are wrong once again and he's right. So what we heard, we've listened to this for decades.

Speaker, the president also noted, and this has been confirmed by nursing students, that they are still not being offered full-time permanent positions; meanwhile, provinces like Nova Scotia are.

When is the minister going to stop relying on temporary casual contracts?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** I think the Member opposite missed the last part of my last comment. Every nurse has been offered a permanent post. We have 222 who have accepted full-time employment out of 246. That's over 90 per cent. We're working on the other 10.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'll tell the minister, I heard quite enough. I think we've all heard quite enough over the last decade with this minister.

Speaker, while the Liberals celebrate recruitment efforts, the Nurses' Union continues to highlight that there's nothing in this budget to retain nurses we already have – contrary to what the minister is trying to convince us. It's no good to bring new nurses in the front door if there are exits out the back. That's why we still have over 500 vacancies.

After a decade in power, why are we still in a crisis when it comes to nurse staffing?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

The Member opposite seems to be plucking numbers out of the air here. We actually have, as of February, 300 RN vacancies across the system. The peak was 750, 18 months ago. The facts of the case are that, in the last time period of six months or so, we recruited 399 registered nurses.

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

**J. HAGGIE:** I would argue that he makes a case about retention and we are working with the Nurses' Union and other stakeholders on working conditions for health care workers, including nurses, to see what we can do to make things better.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I think the minister is playing with numbers because I do trust the president of the Nurses' Union. I'm sure they have their numbers in check. I'm sure they know how many nurses are on the ground. I'm sure they know how many nurses pay union dues.

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

**B. PETTEN:** I trust their numbers. I really do. I trust any union leader's numbers. Government can say what they want to suit them but I trust the union leader's numbers. I have to say that.

Speaker, this budget also fails to allow nurse practitioners to bill government – something even the federal Liberals now support. After 10 years, why are the crowd opposite still opposed? When are we going

to stop forcing seniors to pay out of pocket just to access basic primary care?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

Nurse practitioners form a valued part of our health care system. They are an integral part of primary care.

From the point of view of how they are compensated, those that I have spoken to and those that we have surveyed actually kind of like the salaried arrangements. They like the benefits that go with it. I accept that there are a small group who wish to work through a private practice arrangement. I have asked the RNU on more than one occasion to provide us with a model that would work.

We are working towards making sure that public funds can be used to pay for primary care, whether it's delivered privately or publicly. It will not, however, be fee-for-service; it will be another mechanism.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

The minister needs to talk – he's not talking to the seniors. We're talking to a lot of seniors who are struggling because of this and we're talking to nurse practitioners who would actually like to see this, so maybe they're talking to the wrong group.

We're talking to people who really care. I'm not sure who's he talking to, but the people we're talking continue to believe our plans works. The federal government also agrees.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Do you have a question or what?

**B. PETTEN:** Yes, I got a question, don't worry.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** I'll be waiting for it.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** Nursing students on clinical placements not only go unpaid, they actually pay tuition for the privilege of working those placements. Other professions like engineering ended this practice years ago.

When will the Liberals stop exploiting student nurses for free labour?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to answer a question related to the value that student nurses bring to the system. That's not patting myself on the back, but I do remember my days as a nursing student –

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

**K. HOWELL:** – and completely understand some of the challenges that are being presented to nursing students and some other health sciences students who find themselves in clinical placements where there's no pay.

We are certainly having these conversations. It's something that the student union is keen in bringing to my attention every time that we meet with them, and I've committed that this conversation will continue until we can meet some type of agreement on recognizing the students and the value that they bring to our system.

We're not there yet but we are continuing to work on it.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Let's hope that happens sooner rather than later, but I thank the minister for her answer.

Speaker, internationally recruited nurses have said they feel abandoned, left with no job and no support. Last fall, I raised concerns about 60 nurses from India who were still waiting for placements.

Why is the minister still hiring agency nurses instead of putting local qualified nurses to work?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

We have 178 internationally educated nurses working in the province today – 178. So that's a success story for my colleague from Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

We have \$2.3 million in this year's budget to support new internationally trained nurses into this province. We have given another \$500,000 for a specific mentoring program for these folks to help them orientate to the Canadian situation. We continue to look for support from outside as we bolster our numbers of RNs and reduce our RN vacancies.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

My question was: How many are still waiting for placement, not what you've placed. How many are still waiting for placement?

You said there were 60 from India. Minister, can you tell the House how many internationally-trained nurses are waiting for placement in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

I'm happy to provide that number for the gentleman opposite. I will take today and this time as the time-stamp for that data and I'll bring it back to the House.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, yesterday in the Budget Speech there was no mention of the vacant social worker positions and the last we heard, last year, there was a shortage of 100 social workers. We know that every vacancy represents a senior, a child or a vulnerable Newfoundlander or Labradorian that has been greatly impacted by the shortage.

I ask the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development to update this hon. House on these critical social worker vacancies.

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

**P. PIKE:** Thank you, Speaker.

We are certainly committed to the safety and well-being of children and youth in our province. As of March 31, 2025, there are 277 social workers and 65 social work assistants delivering front-line child protection services in the department.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the positions of student assistant workers, they are new. There's a good uptake and it's certainly helping

alleviate the workload of many of our social workers.

Thank you.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, this is a big issue for the residents there's no doubt, but the question would be how many vacancies exist today in relation to the social worker program in our province?

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

**P. PIKE:** Mr. Speaker, we're experiencing the same problems that other jurisdictions are having when it comes to child welfare workers and, you know, we're certainly doing everything we can to entice these workers to work in our department.

Last week, I had the opportunity to speak to first- and second-year social workers and, in my conversations with them, it was great to note that they wanted to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador and hopefully they will. A great reception, there were a number of recruiters there, of course, looking for them, but most of them want to stay in Labrador. I also had opportunity to speak to their parents. They want them to stay home as well.

Thank you.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Mr. Speaker, unsure of the number of vacancies that exist, but I'll move on.

This Legislature passed a new *Adult Protection Act, 2021* to protect vulnerable

individuals including seniors in personal care homes. We had a pretty robust debate on that legislation.

In light of the scathing report of the Auditor General into the neglect and abuse of seniors in personal care homes, has the Minister of CSSD ordered a review?

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

**P. PIKE:** Thank you for the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We certainly are committed to protecting the health and well-being of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and ensuring the safety of those in neglectful or abusive situations. My department has policies and procedures that guide the adult protection process. My officials have a very collaborative relationship – an excellent collaborative relationship – with the Department of Health and Community Services, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, with police and with our justice system when dealing with these matters.

The Adult Protection Act applies only when it has been legally and clinically determined that an adult is in danger.

Thank you.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** According to the AG report, there are adults that were in danger. Policies and procedures, yes, we have but, I'm assuming by the answer, no review.

The minister launched a new guide for seniors on April 4 that highlighted information on reporting elder abuse and the Adult Protection Act and says – quote –

everyone has a legal duty to report suspected cases of abuse and neglect.

Speaker, why is the minister failing to act on his legislative responsibility?

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

**P. PIKE:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for bringing up our Guide to Services and Programs for seniors; it's a great guide. It's certainly something that we heard when we were travelling around the province, that seniors need a guide like that. It's a first; we launched this program last Friday here in St. John's to about 150, 160 seniors and it was very well received.

All Members here, I'm sure, have been told that they can go to the office of CSSD and pick up some copies to get out in their districts when they go out for Easter. We'll have lots more printed after. I wanted to address that first if that's okay because these guides are really important. We're getting a lot of calls on them and people are very positive about it.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, last night during budget Estimates, we learned that fines owing to the government have ballooned to over \$50 million. Yes, \$51.7 million is going uncollected.

Speaker, the Liberals have made many promises over the years to collect on this money, yet the problem has only gotten worse. I ask the minister, why?

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

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Speaker, and I'm happy to stand up and speak to this even though I wasn't in the Estimates last night.

What I can point out is that this is absolutely an evergreen issue. It's been around certainly the last 10 years. We were here that decade or so, then the previous government and decades before that. It has been an issue and it proves extremely difficult in order to find innovative solutions going forward. I don't think any side can promise that; although, we've certainly made lots of efforts.

I can point out, though, that the Fines and Administration Division has received just under \$10 million in the last year through 407 active arrangements for payments. They'll continue on with those efforts and I have every reason to believe that they'll continue to make good on getting people to pay the fines that they owe.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, \$51.7 million is unacceptable and we need to find innovative ways of doing things better, like community service. Back in 2019, the department announced the fine options pilot program for people to work off their outstanding fines. It still has not been established and millions more has gone uncollected.

Speaker, after a decade of failure, how many more years are going to go by before government takes action on this?

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

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

I agree. Whoever the minister was in 2019 had a great idea. I'm not sure what happened to that idea after that.

Unfortunately, I've been out and there's been multiple ministers there, so I can't say whether there was a technical issue with the program –

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

**A. PARSONS:** I assume.

I can't say what the issue is with that particular program but, similar to Estimates that we had this morning where the Member opposite had creative solutions to issues that we face, I would say to the Member opposite, we are certainly open to any solution that anyone has to address this issue that's been around for, certainly, half a century.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Minister of Health is using a significant 40 per cent bed vacancy rate at the Janeway as justification for moving adult gynecology from the Health Sciences Centre.

I ask the minister: Are the Janeway beds unoccupied because there are simply not enough sick children to occupy them who need them or because Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services and government have failed to staff the hospital appropriately?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

The Janeway is a valuable, even crucial, resource for our health care system, and I'd like to take this opportunity, as it's the first I've had, to thank the staff for all their hard work during COVID and afterwards. So thank you.

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

**J. HAGGIE:** There is not now, nor has ever been, any intent to diminish the range of services provided at the Janeway. What I understand is happening, and it is at a very preliminary high level, is to look at utilization of resources across the Health Sciences site.

The only thing I'm aware of in relation to the comments the Member opposite makes is a potential visit from staff to go and look at other models such as the IWK in Halifax which is a well-renowned facility. There are no plans, concrete or otherwise, at the moment.

**SPEAKER:** The minister's time is expired.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Certainly, the doctors don't feel that they're being consulted or listened to on this and feel there's more than just limited consultation.

Speaker, the minister stated that they're trying to replicate the model at the IWK Health Centre in Halifax but women's health is in the children's hospital, except he failed to add that the women's health centre and the pediatric centre are two separate buildings with a link between them. No other pediatric, tertiary care centre in Canada is doing what NLHS and the department are proposing.

Will the minister simply admit that he is trying to solve a long-term care and acute-care bed crisis on the backs of sick children?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** No, I will not admit that I am trying to do anything on the back of children, sick or otherwise. I think the Member is putting words in my mouth. I have not made any proposal, nor has Dr. Parfrey, the CEO. There are discussions, and discussions have to start somewhere, and the first time you have that discussion is, we've never heard it before.

So I'm not trying to be argumentative with the Member, but the fact of the case is Dr. Parfrey is doing what any good, conscientious CEO should do, which is to look at the resources he has to deal with overcapacity of one of our major tertiary hospitals, and I commend him for doing it.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, government finally listened to the people of Labrador West and committed to satellite infrastructure in Wabush to help with wildfire response, but there are still a lot of questions about what this infrastructure actually is.

So I ask the minister: Will this include permanently bringing back the water bomber base to Wabush or is it simply just rebranding the forestry office in Labrador West?

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

**G. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, to much acclaim, we announced the Atlantic Wildfire Centre

in the fall of 2024. Part of that announcement is we scripted, we mapped out for all to see that we intended to put infrastructure, assets in Lab West. We put forward a plan that was based on experts, professionals in the field who designed a strategy to be able to attack wildfire both on the ground, in the air, using the best of wildfire science.

The hon. Member continues with his opposition to the plan, noting he would prefer one asset, one water bomber. Our plan is to use wildfire science, drafted by experts, to place multiple assets on an at-risk basis in the areas where they're needed.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Satellite infrastructure is welcome, but this means little without commitment to returning the water bomber back to Labrador West, where it belongs. The safety of our communities and natural resources are at stake.

So I ask the minister: Will he commit to bringing the water bomber back to Wabush which was unjustly taken from Wabush?

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

**G. BYRNE:** We hear the hon. Member's opposition to the wildfire strategy – a plan that was put in place based on science and on best practices. A plan crafted by the very same people who successfully guided us through the 2025 wildfires of Lab West and the 2024 wildfires of Central and for years before.

This opposition to that plan, the hon. Member's plan is to place one asset. Our plan is to use wildfire science. The plan of the experts is to use wildfire science to forecast risk, to place multiple assets in the field ahead of risk and to be able to actively fight fires. His plan is to cap Lab West at one water bomber. Our plan is to much better than that.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

**SPEAKER:** The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### **Tabling of Documents**

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

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

I'm happy to table for the House the initial quarterly report of the Independent Churchill River Negotiation Oversight Panel.

We actually spoke about this this morning, didn't realize it was ready, and here it is being tabled.

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

### **Notices of Motion**

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 9, Bill 112.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Human Organ and Tissue Donation, Bill 114.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** If I could have an addendum to my notice, that report is also available online, Mr. Speaker, for those that might be interested.

**SPEAKER:** Duly noted, Sir.

**A. PARSONS:** Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Renewable Energy Resources in the Province, Bill 113.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act No. 3, Bill 111.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, April 16, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and the conduct of Government Business.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That notwithstanding Standing Order 8(3)(b) at the conclusion of proceedings on Wednesday, April 16, that this House do adjourn until Monday, May 12, 2025.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Route 10 on the Southern Avalon forms a large section of the Irish Loop. This is a significant piece of infrastructure and is the main highway along the Irish Loop. This highway plays a major role in residential and commercial growth of the region.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that immediate brush cutting is required on Route 10 on the Southern Shore Highway, as large sections of brush along this

highway is a significant safety hazard for the high volume of travelling motorists who travel this highway daily. This work is essential in the prevention of moose-vehicle accidents and safety on Route 10.

Speaker, I've certainly done this petition many times over, and there is some brush cutting happening in the district right now as we speak, or it was up until last week. They were supposed to be there last October. They were supposed to be there in January. They came there two weeks ago. I've been up in the area four times and they're doing good work, there's no doubt about that. We got some brush cutting, but there are other areas in the district that are vital to have done.

Right now the brush cutting equipment is removed. I watched it for three or four days. They took the equipment and moved it. They had a small – I think it's called a 6500 excavator with rubber tracks on it with an extension that reaches out to cover the road. Not a full excavator that's like out on the highway where they were twinning the highways, but a smaller excavator that does the job, that it can reach so far and doing a good job at that. But all of a sudden the equipment is moved.

I did call the department. They did say it was going to be back sometime this week. It's not back there yet, but it's important because we're coming up on this time of the year when the moose are going to be on the roads, coming out through, and when you drive the district, in many parts of the district the alders and the trees are coming out through the guard rails.

For what they have done right now, they haven't reached the major infrastructure where it's vitally needed right now. They should be in the area. We hope that the department can get back there and get that brush cutting done and be able to extend and get some more brush cutting in the district.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Speaker.

There have been numerous incidents of residents of the District of Bonavista transported by ambulance to G.B. Cross Memorial in Clarenville for medical attention, only to find out that thereafter they have to wait until the following morning for medical transport home.

Many of these residents are non-ambulatory seniors and are having to spend the night, some in excess of 16 hours, on a gurney in a crowded emergency room due to this.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to investigate the current medical transport system and make immediate changes to better address the welfare of these residents, and alleviating much-needed space in often overcrowded emergency rooms like at G.B. Cross Memorial.

I was talking with a lady from Bunyan's Cove, Lisa Keats, and Lisa's dad needed to be transported to G.B. Cross. It was around supper hour. He was non-ambulator, transported for treatment, received treatment, only to find out that he could not be transported home.

Lisa Keats' dad is a diabetic. I know one would say, well, if he's in the emergency room, he may be cared for, but to leave a senior on a gurney in the emergency room for up to 16 hours, I think, might come under the cruel and unusual punishment category.

I say that what the signatures on the petition are asking for is for it to be reviewed. If Clarenville has one transport ambulance that's transporting people from the tip of the

peninsula in Bonavista to St. John's – if it's only one – then that ought to be looked into. That is what the petition asks, to look into it.

We said that we've got crowded emergency rooms. Well, we do have seniors in these rooms that can't get home because they need the medical transport to be transported back is where they want to go. So I would think it serves the emergency room to know that they've got less in there and the senior patient would like to be home as soon as he or she could get, and 16 hours is too long of a wait.

We ask the minister to look into it and let's see what we can do about the medical transport serving the Bonavista Peninsula to G.B. Cross in Clarenville.

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 1.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** Thank you, Speaker.

It is a privilege to stand in this hon. House of Assembly today representing the great people of Baie Verte - Green Bay.

It is especially on days like yesterday, budget day, that we are reminded it is the people of our province who put us all here. Since May 28 last year, I have been constantly hearing of their frustration from across my district and from across the province with government decision-making. So we must never forget that this House is indeed the people's House.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians elected us to serve them. They elected us to help to make their lives better and our province stronger. The provincial budget should be a key, enabling plan to make that happen. Plan – you're going to hear me talk a lot this afternoon about plan. I've spent the bulk of my adult life associating with developing plans. In the absence of a proper plan, we reflect on what has continued to happen: Government becomes reactionary and costs increase.

So what's in this year's budget? Well, there are lots in the budget, Speaker, but there's very little that will help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to deal with affordability and the crisis that we are in and all the other challenges that we are facing, like access to health care and safety across all of our communities.

*Budget 2025* missed the mark, Speaker. It was a missed opportunity. The budget is simply filled with Liberal re-announcements. Simply put, it is a recycled budget. We were hoping for measures that would address the soaring cost of living and improve access to health care for the more than 160,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who do not have access to a family doctor. But this didn't happen.

The budget also completely ignores health care in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. There's nothing new in the budget to address the cost of living, and no tax breaks for families or seniors. In fact, the sugar tax remains. The indexing of the Seniors' Benefit does not go far enough; it's only approximately a little over 40 bucks. Our party proposed to increase the Seniors' Benefit by 20 per cent. It would have provided the province's most vulnerable seniors with an additional \$300 annually, helping them to actually do better than tread water when facing the rising cost of living.

There was nothing in the budget for nurse practitioners. The repeated calls by our party and others from across the entire

province for the Liberal government to act, to cover the cost of primary care services provided by nurse practitioners, have simply gone unheeded.

The Medical Transportation Assistance Program is still not 100 per cent funded. We asked for the shingles vaccine to be offered to all seniors, not just those 65 to 70, in our province. Again, government failed to act.

Government didn't provide any details on the \$200-million contingency to address the US tariffs. We have no idea, nor does the rest of the province, on how this money will be used.

There was not enough in this budget to help grow and diversify our economy. This is especially discouraging at a time of so much global economic uncertainty, considering the impact of the US tariffs, with so much opportunity to be leveraged from our resources with a right plan.

When we look at the budget document, Speaker, we always look for measures that will benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and help improve their lives, as well as measures that will set our province on a better path for prosperity. Unfortunately, the budget does neither.

Let's look at the Liberal track record. Since being elected in 2015, the Liberals have delivered 10 budgets. This is their tenth. This is also the last budget before the next provincial general election.

The people of the province will only think about this budget that was brought down yesterday. However, they will be thinking about all 10 Liberal budgets. If I could quote from a leader that I served with, who used this term, a decade of darkness for many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** They will be thinking about 10 years of poor fiscal management. They

will be thinking about 10 years of poor decision-making. Unless you are a Liberal insider. They will be thinking about 10 years of poor accountability. And when people go to the polls this year, they will be thinking about a government that is out of touch with reality.

There are so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that are trying to live just day to day to get by. We are not all in the same boat. They will be thinking about the need for a new government, simply because they deserve a better government. Our party under our leader, the MHA for Stephenville - Port au Port, is ready to offer all Newfoundlanders something better.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** Our party has a plan that will make the life for all, not just those connected to the Liberal government.

So what is the main reason that the people of our province need and want a better alternative? The answer is simple. The current government is not delivering for them. They are not addressing the needs of our people. They are out of touch with what really matters to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Today, I will give actually many examples. For those from around the bay like where I grew up, the gill net is full of them.

The big question is, are people better off now than they were 10 years ago? There is only one answer to that question: No. The cost of living is too high. Health care is inaccessible, with long wait times.

Thousands of people are without a family doctor. People have to pay – to pay – to see a nurse practitioner to access primary care. So many people now don't feel safe in their own communities. Crime is on the rise across our great province, unfortunately.

Let's look at the facts about the Liberal record and determine how the last 10 years have impacted the people of our great

province. I'm going to start here and highlight some of the taxation. Let's look at the Liberal sugar tax. Everyone knows that this is a regressive and senseless tax, just like the carbon tax. We are the only jurisdiction in Canada adding it. Why? Most people see it as Liberal policy, nothing more than an arrogant, out-of-touch tax grab.

The sugar tax does nothing to help create a healthier population; in fact, this tax is making life even more difficult for those trying to make ends meet. I'm reminded of seniors that I have talked to who have complained to me because they like having a Pepsi with a plate of fisherman's brewis. So let's look at some articles that relate to the sugar tax.

VOCM from the 5th of August – and this was titled, "Provincial Tax Not Curbing Newfoundland's Craving for Sugary Drinks: Canadian Beverage Association." "Numbers from the Canadian Beverage Association suggest Newfoundland and Labrador's thirst for sugary drinks has not been totally curbed by the provincial government's sugar tax."

"CEO Krista Scaldwell says over 70 per cent of those asked say they weren't changing their habits, despite there being a levy tacked on to the sale price.

"She chalks it up to people wanting to have the products they've always liked," just like the rest of Canada does.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** "Scaldwell says companies have put an extra push on developing new products that contain less sugar, and have made efforts to make nutrition information more apparent. She says imposing such a tax isn't a problem solver, as many will either not change their habits or they'll switch to another sugary product that doesn't fall under the list of taxed items."

We are in a cost-of-living crisis here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We must find all possible means to lower the taxation across all Newfoundlander and Labrador.

The minister yesterday quoted Churchill, so I will highlight what Churchill said with regard to government and taxation as well. Government can't tax themselves into prosperity. It would be like standing in a bucket and trying to pull yourself up by the handle. I'm afraid if the Liberals fully understood how buckets are used in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, that they would want to tax that as well.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** Support for seniors: Caring for seniors is truly a moral obligation of government. We have to take care of those who came before us and built this province. Advancing age leaves people more vulnerable. Abandoning seniors in their vulnerable years is morally reprehensible.

So let's look at what the Liberals have said previously. Their 2021 red book said: Our government understands the struggles faced by our seniors and will ensure it provides vital support to seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador. Clearly, that was just rhetoric because our seniors are suffering. No one has been failed more by this Liberal government over the past decade than our seniors.

The Liberals boast of creating a Seniors' Advocate position as an Officer of this House, but they continue to ignore the Advocate. They don't bother to listen to what the Advocate tells them about the plight of all of our seniors. Furthermore, the Seniors' Advocate does not have investigatory powers; the Liberal government didn't put them in the legislation despite the repeated calls of PC MHAs back when this legislation was first introduced in this House.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** What does that mean? That means that the Seniors' Advocate can only do so much. They can be an advocate, but they cannot investigate.

Sadly, we have thousands of seniors now in poverty. The Seniors' Advocate report found a third of our seniors can't afford to make ends meet; two-thirds of those seniors skip meals and can't afford prescribed diets, medicine and medical devices. Many live on toast and tea – that's like being in a prison – to use the Advocate's own words – actually, that's worse than being in a prison. Many split their medicine, compromising their health.

Under the Liberal government, seniors have become more impoverished. They are worse off than when the Liberals came to office. In December 2024, we brought forward a private Members' resolution to this house to immediately increase the Seniors' Benefit by 20 per cent – so \$300 annually. The Liberals voted against it. Shameful. This increase was once again denied in the budget. They tied it to inflation and, in tying it to inflation, they gave our seniors a little over a \$40 increase. That is insufficient to what our seniors need. That is, in fact, merely a pittance.

I want to highlight from the press release that was put out in December after we did that debate on our private Members' resolution: The PC's proposal would have provided the province's most vulnerable seniors with an additional \$300 annually, starting this past January, helping them to face the rising cost of living. The difference between our plan and what the Liberals just did in the budget is over \$250.

"It is heartbreaking that the Liberals are delaying supporting our seniors who are struggling more than ever to afford necessities like food, medicine, and housing." The modest increase – and it was just a modest increase – would have been a meaningful step to alleviate their financial

hardships. Struggling seniors deserve better from government.

Our seniors, though, can be assured of one thing: that when we form government, that 20 per cent is going to be added to their Seniors' Benefit.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** We have a situation now where the frail elderly in our province are being ignored. The 2022 Health Accord said our seniors are among the frailest in all of Canada. The Accord said there needs to be a program designed specifically to address their needs including care, recreation and social connection to make them stronger, more healthy and more independent, essentially, to take care of our seniors in their golden years.

Recommendation 8.1 of the Health Accord demanded that this government, "Develop and implement a formal Provincial Frail Elderly Program to address the critical need of our population." So, years later, where's the program? Where is the action on this recommendation of the Health Accord? Gone or completely absent.

Then, we have the government's so-called poverty plan. The government released a paltry plan claiming to be a poverty reduction plan. The Liberals' big idea to fix poverty in seniors was a basic income program, but only 110 seniors have enrolled. Every Member of this House here knows there are more than 110 seniors who need that benefit.

This is from an article from The Canadian Press from a month ago and it was titled: Newfoundland launched a basic income program for older adults. "Only 110 people have enrolled so far in Newfoundland and Labrador's basic income program for some older adults, a figure advocates say underscores the complexity of traditional social assistance programs that often leave users afraid of losing benefits.

"Josh Smee, chief executive of the non-profit Food First N.L., said he wasn't surprised enrollment seemed low." He said: The system itself is so complicated. I would imagine that the conversation about a big shift in how your benefits come through could be intimidating and, for some, with even more money coming in, they risk losing government paying for much-needed services like home support.

Dan Meades agreed that people may worry they'll end up with fewer benefits. The provincial coordinator with the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador said, "he hopes the province is tracking such problems and adjusting the program with an aim to ultimately scale it up."

"Smee said people on income support are often weary of the program's complex and voluminous rules, many of which are set up to claw back benefits if a person earns money or changes their living arrangements. They may be afraid to agree to receive more money in a new program, he said" – if it doesn't really benefit them in the end. So here we have a situation where you could be offering on one hand and taking more back on the other.

I'd also like to highlight here, when we talk about seniors and benefits, and I was hoping to see something in the budget on it, and that's the Provincial Home Repair Program. There's an opportunity there for seniors to get up to \$5,000 to support some basic home improvement: windows, doors, et cetera.

We've had far too many seniors, and I know of several in my district, that were excluded because they were over that threshold by \$47. Their challenge then becomes: Do I stay in my home or do I then become a greater burden on the health care system in looking for social housing? We need to ultimately look at those thresholds to reduce the complete burden on our system.

I'd like, now, to talk about the shingles vaccine. The shingles vaccine for seniors, this was another missed opportunity and an announcement done in haste. Like my colleague on this side of the House, MHA for Conception Bay South said in a news release: "The Liberal government's announcement on the shingles vaccine is another example of doing the bare minimum, just as we approach an election year." He went on to say: "The Liberals are more focused on photo ops than on truly addressing the needs of Newfoundland and Labrador's seniors and vulnerable populations."

I'll highlight from our press release from a month ago with regard to the shingles vaccine. The MHA from Conception Bay South criticized the government for failing to cover all seniors and vulnerable individuals. "He says the Liberal's commitment to coverage for some seniors only occurred because the Progressive Conservatives committed to full coverage" for all seniors.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** The Liberal government's announcement is another example, like I said, of just doing the bare minimum. "For years, the Seniors' Advocate has called for the shingles vaccine to be made available to seniors and immunocompromised individuals, but the Liberals have repeatedly refused to act." Now, we learn that the coverage for all seniors that the Liberals announced was really just for those 65 to 70, a half-hearted solution that leaves too many people behind.

So what about seniors over 70? Do they exist? Yes, they exist and yes, they need coverage. In fact, the Seniors' Advocate has been calling for full coverage since 2019 and the Liberal's delayed action is a clear sign they are only responding now because of the upcoming election. It is unfortunate that it took pressure from our party to force them to act.

Now I want to highlight with regard to the shingles vaccine from a research study that was done in Ontario. One thing that we know with regard to shingles is the risk increases with age. By the time you reach 85, your risk is 50 per cent. So the research study in Ontario found that with those who received the vaccine, there was a 19 per cent decrease in shingles-related outpatient visits. There was also a 38 per cent decrease in shingles-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations.

So we have a situation here. If we provide a small additional investment providing that shingles vaccine to all seniors, we can alleviate significant pressure on our health care system. There is a significant return on the shingles investment, and that must be made.

The other thing I'd also like to highlight with regard to the shingles vaccine is it has a positive impact on reducing the onset of dementia. Again, why this government is only offering 65 to 70 is beyond me. We on this side of the House, the PC Party, will implement shingles to all seniors.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** I'd now like to talk about poverty and affordability. Let's talk about the plight of vulnerable people in the broad range of age brackets, including children. First, let me provide some context. When the PC government came to office in 2003, 22 years ago, Newfoundland and Labrador led the country in child poverty. That was after the legacy of 14 years of Liberal governments.

The PC government then announced a bold strategy to move from worst to best in addressing child poverty, and to do so within a decade. The PC Poverty Reduction Strategy was a comprehensive, cross-departmental, collaborate, flexible, multi-faceted and highly invested strategy to address poverty in its many forms.

It was not a cobbled together list of things that government was already doing. It was targeted measures focused on delivering the greatest results. It was a plan. Most importantly, it was focused on giving people the means of escaping the grip of poverty and achieving a measure of self-reliance, freedom and independence. National poverty leaders called this the model for all of Canada.

A decade later, in 2015 when this government came to power, this province was reporting the lowest child poverty rates in the country on objective measures. The plan succeeded in delivering for people in need. That was the PC plan.

Stats Canada information confirmed that Newfoundland and Labrador in 2015 had the lowest level of poverty in Canada. In fact, there were almost 38,000 fewer people living in poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2015 than there were in 2003. The percentage of our population receiving income support, at 6.4 per cent, was the lowest ever recorded in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We were the leaders in poverty reduction, Speaker. It was the result of a lot of hard work by a lot of people, and a proper plan. But what has happened since? Well, 2015 was the year the government changed. The Liberals came into office. And it has gone downhill from there. Whether out of spite or ignorance, the Liberals cancelled the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Yes, you got that right. The Liberals cancelled the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

What did they replace it with? Absolutely nothing. We all know that actions have consequences. Today, after 10 years of Liberal governments, we are no longer Canada's leader in addressing child poverty. Children in this province are worse off than when the Liberals came to power. So you can see, Mr. Speaker, facts bear truth. This has been truly a decade of darkness.

The 2021 red book promised to lead development of a renewed strategy to reduce poverty in consultation with stakeholders, experts and community leaders. But that promise was only lip service. All these years later, there is still no poverty reduction strategy. In four years, the current Premier has failed to produce one, despite his promise.

In November 2023, there was a brief, cobbled together news release barely a page long, a paltry excuse for a strategy.

It was full of policy holes; nothing for seniors, nothing for persons with disabilities; nothing for Indigenous, Northern or remote communities; nothing related to health care needs and education, nothing that pulled together community groups and change lives through targeted measures. These were mostly existing initiatives, really, just Scotch-tape together with some pity quotes tacked on. This was not a model for anyone in the country to emulate or to be excited about.

This was nothing but a charade, a camouflage for inaction and, to quote from around the bay, not a full loaf but merely the crust slice on a loaf. Ten years to build, 10 years to destroy, it took a decade for the PC strategy to change lives and achieve its bold objective; because addressing poverty takes time, we know that. In the Liberal decade without a strategy, those gains have been completely eroded. We are no longer a model for all of Canada, we are the cautionary tale.

It is the unfortunate result of bad decisions by this Liberal government. Liberals did this; there's no one to blame for the Liberal's bad decisions but the government themselves. It was their choice, they had a choice, and deliberately made and deliberately continued on their watch. They own the consequences of those decisions; unfortunately, all of Newfoundland and Labrador is wearing it. It was a shameful

legacy of constant neglect and consequent suffering.

*Budget 2025* is no better. You would think that after a decade of doing the wrong thing and seeing the consequences the Liberals would be ready in the budget to do the right thing, especially since they promised in their 2021 red book, but no. In this year's budget, the Liberals have simply added up the normal social spending and pretended it is a comprehensive strategy. It is not; there's no planning, no collaboration, no targeting and simply no accountability. It's just words on a page.

We have a situation that continues to deepen, and that is the affordability which is making all of this worse. Instead of shifting people out of poverty, this government has overseen an increase in the ranks of the poor and, as some like to say, the working poor. The unaddressed affordability crisis is leaving more people unable to make ends meet.

Food banks have never been busier. People go to food banks because they are desperate. Lineups at food banks remind people of the dirty thirties. We are constantly hearing the news that the demand for food banks continues to surge. People have nowhere else to turn. People are struggling. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians across the entire province are struggling. It's a very sad story.

I want to highlight now, with regard to food banks, a couple of articles that I think reinforces the message in regard to food banks and the concerns. This one is from CBC news this past November and it's from the Community Food Sharing Association: Community Food Sharing Association expects to help 8,500 families going into the holidays. "These food bank managers say more government support is needed as demand for service increases."

Demand is increasing at Newfoundland and Labrador food banks ahead of the holiday

season, and one food bank chair says a lack of solutions from government is not helping. "Peter Wells, chair of the board for the Conception Bay South-Paradise food bank, said his group is moving between 350 and 400 food hampers per month." Demand is up, donations are down, he said, but a lack of government support is making things even more desperate.

"We get absolutely nothing from government. And in fact, I've even heard government people say there's no need for food banks. If there's no need for food banks, why are we here?" Wells told CBC News. "I've been hearing that for over 35 years.... Government got to change its attitude and realize that people of the province are going hungry and the province is not helping one bit."

"At the Community Food Sharing Association in St. John's, which supports 60 food banks across Newfoundland and Labrador, manager Tina Bishop said the cost of food purchases has risen 67 per cent from last year, and the cost of transporting that food has risen by 51 per cent." Bishop would like to see more government programs, like income support, get reviewed in the long term.

"Food Banks Canada says 62 per cent of food bank clients in Newfoundland and Labrador are also on income support." A basic right – a basic human right – is food on the table. Nobody, and I mean nobody, should have to go without food.

As Bishop noted, their numbers are showing over 30 per cent of users are children under the age of 18. "There's no child in Canada that should have to go without food." Wells said he'd like to see the province help by addressing taxation and introducing grants to help food banks.

Now, Speaker, on that note of helping food banks and government support for food banks, I'd like to note a budget and government allocation, it's all about choices.

Just imagine the \$1 million-plus being spent on a useless political office in Grand Falls-Windsor to give a former candidate –

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

**L. PADDOCK:** – to give a former candidate a job, if that amount was distributed across our Newfoundland and Labrador food banks. A large number of people could've been helped. Budgeting is about choices and, unfortunately, the Liberals continue to show they view taxpayer money as their own.

Let's stay on some of the food bank issues. I've got another article here with regard to the ongoing demand. This is from Radio-Canada this past fall as well, noting food banks in Newfoundland and Labrador are so desperate they're even cutting back on instant coffee.

"Some food banks cutting back hamper items, as demand surges across Canada.

"At the Bridges to Hope food bank in St. John's, spiking demand is forcing staff members to cut back on what they give to the hungry."

"They also used to hand out one full cup of instant coffee" – one full cup. "Now it's only three-quarters of a cup, says executive director Lesley Burgess.

"Just kind of small, cost-saving measures like that, because we don't want to see our hampers get any smaller ...."

"Burgess says the belt-tightening is because they expect to serve thousands more people this year compared to last.

"She suspects 17,000 people might walk through their doors by the end of the year – a 30 per cent rise over last year ....

"Bridges to Hope isn't the only food bank in Newfoundland and Labrador" – as I noted – "seeing that spike in demand."

They noted: We could see upwards of four new people registering every day of the week. Kaitlin Clarke, communications and outreach co-ordinator of the St. Vincent de Paul food bank in Carbonear, a rural town more than 100 kilometres from St. John's, noted: "Demand is crazy high and everybody's struggling. Donors are struggling. We've seen people that were previously regular donors [to] us that have now come to us looking for help."

Food banks are reaching their limit. "Food bank demand is nearly double what it was five years ago, according to the report ...."

"The report says increases in housing and food prices are driving more people toward the food bank.

"It's not uncommon for us to talk to someone whose rent has just been increased \$300 or \$400, and for someone on a fixed income, that money's got to come from somewhere. And usually it's the food budget that is the first to be taken from," Burgess said.

"The report also says more food bank clients are working, at 18 per cent up from 12 per cent in 2019." The working poor.

"It also reports that nearly 70 per cent of food bank users live in markets rental houses" – and their rental costs are soaring – while a third of clients are children.

"The report also wrote that 32 per cent of clients are newcomers to Canada who have been in the country for less than 10 years.

"Meanwhile, some of the clients at the food bank Clarke runs face an additional barrier between them and their next meal." That is the transportation to get to the food bank, because a number of them live in areas where there is no public transportation.

I'd like to highlight from a press release that my fellow colleague from Bonavista highlighted last month with regard to

“Increased Food Bank Usage Demonstrates need for Fulsome Poverty Reduction and Prevention Plan: Pardy.”

“Recent news articles indicate that 50 per cent of people who are now visiting food banks are new users. We know from past studies that many of these people are seniors and working individuals. This means that the cost-of-living crisis in our province is worsening.”

“We need – as was done before by a previous Progressive Conservative administration – “a responsive Poverty Reduction and Prevention Strategy –

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

**L. PADDOCK:** – with the goal” – as was done previously by that PC administration – “of making our province’s poverty rates the lowest in the country. This strategy must look at preventing poverty in addition to providing services to those experiencing poverty,” Pardy highlighted. ‘I must wonder: if the Furey-Liberals had an effective Poverty Reduction and Prevention Strategy would food bank usage be increasing?’”

So let me just highlight there on a poverty reduction strategy before I continue on and what we will do as a PC government. We will cancel the sugar tax.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** We will raise the Seniors’ Benefit by 20 per cent.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** And we will continue to lead the charge for the complete repeal of the carbon tax, not just the consumer carbon tax but the industrial carbon tax as well.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** And we will turn back time to deliver a responsive poverty reduction and prevention strategy.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** We delivered it once and it was the best in Canada, and we will do it again.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** I’d now like to talk about health care. Liberals have ignored the Health Accord regarding child poverty. The Liberal government is ignoring their own Health Accord, published in 2022. That Accord says the following about the consequences of this resurgence of child poverty.

“Children who experience poverty have an increased likelihood of chronic illnesses and a shortened life expectancy.” Every child deserves an equal opportunity. “Poverty creates and widens achievement gaps. Starting in infancy, gaps are evident in key aspects of learning, knowledge, and socio-emotional development. Children living in poverty lag behind their peers at kindergarten entry and ultimately are more likely to drop out of school or fail to obtain post-secondary education.

“Poverty leads to poor physical, emotional, and behavioural health. Children living in poverty are more likely to experience food insecurity and are less likely to receive preventative medical and dental care. Children living in poverty are more likely to live in neighbourhoods with concentrated poverty, which is associated with numerous social ills such as academic underachievement; more social and behavioural problems; worse health and physical outcomes; exposure to environmental toxins; and other physical hazards, including crime and violence.

“We also note the reality of intergenerational poverty, that is, poverty transmitted from

one generation to another, with children from families living in poverty more likely to become adults themselves living in poverty. The consequences of intergenerational poverty include food insecurity, birth and developmental issues, unsafe living conditions, and increased risk of violence, incarceration, and victimization. Every consequence of growing up in poverty acts as another barrier for someone to rise above the poverty line.

This province has a higher percentage of families and unattached individuals with after-tax incomes less than \$40,000 compared to Canada as a whole. So do we believe our children are our future? If we do, it is time for action and we are talking about children living in poverty. If government is failing them at this age, where will they end up when they grow up? Government must now look at what was done by a previous PC administration and have a proper poverty reduction strategy.

I'd now like to shift to persons with disabilities, and that's no better. Let's consider persons with disabilities, a very important issue – not just an important issue but I believe we, as a society, we in this House of Assembly, have a moral obligation to take care of those that are least able to defend themselves.

The 2021 red book stated, "All people have the right to access services and participate fully in their communities without barriers. The Liberal Government affirms an ongoing commitment and partnership with the Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL. We will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure equitable access to services and opportunities for people with disabilities." But are our persons with disabilities really any better off under the Liberals? Simply put, no.

The Coalition of Persons with Disabilities refused to celebrate with the Premier over

their treatment. In November 2023, the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities dropped out of the Premier's international day celebrations because of the government's regressive actions on the *Buildings Accessibility Act* on compliance with accessibility standards.

The government ignored the recommendations of the advisory board, unbelievable. The government has also removed some disabilities from protection; again, unbelievable. Advocates have used terms such as backwards, outdated and an illusion of inclusion to describe the changes. This is the opposite of what the Premier promised: equitable, partnership and communities without barriers.

It is the exact opposite of what he owed the persons with disabilities in this province. It is the exact opposite of what all of us, we, have as a moral obligation. We need results, not lip service. Lip service and photo ops do not lead to inclusion; only tangible investment, developed in collaboration with persons with disabilities, will lead to real change.

The Coalition of Persons with Disabilities Newfoundland and Labrador, CODNL, have two key requests: The creation of a disabilities advocate and multi-year core funding. So where is this Liberal government on either? The budget even yesterday, neither of them have been actioned.

So let me just review what was done with regard to the disability advocate. This was an article from Juanita Mercer in *The Telegram* titled: "NL government promised to create a disability advocate in 2020 – why hasn't it been done?"

"People with disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador have been waiting for an Advocate for Persons with Disabilities since it was first put in a ministerial mandate letter back in 2020" – five years ago. "How many politicians does it take to create a disability

advocate position? Three,” – that’s how many ministers CSSD has had – “but none of them will do it.” Why?

“The promise to create a disability advocate has sat on ministerial mandate letters for so long that the original minister who was tasked with it has retired from politics.”

In April 2021, when one of the Liberal leadership candidates took over the portfolio, the Premier wrote, “Please continue to work to establish an Advocate for Persons with Disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador.” Today, with the current minister, that mandate is still there but what work has been done?

Nancy Reid, the executive director of CODNL, said that “a disability advocate is integral to ensuring equitable rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities in the province.

“Reid said she was a member of the Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities for six years, and during that time the council strongly informed the minister about the importance of an advocate.

“Disability rights activist Anne Malone encouraged everyone in the province to think about how many people they see in their day-to-day lives who have visible disabilities.”

“Persons with disabilities can be any of us. Many of us acquire a disability in our lifetime,” Reid indicated. So what does the community think? Reid said people are extremely frustrated. “I have disabilities,” she said, “and sometimes it really feels defeating.

“You feel like you’re just treading water all the time, and you don’t know how much longer you can tread water before you go under. It’s really a difficult time.”

“Every day a child is in school without ASL, or without a screen reader, or without whatever it is they need, is a day in that child’s life that cannot be recovered.”

“We don’t have time to sit for years and years on mandates. We just don’t.”

“Lives are passing, and particularly in early life, the way that we prepare children to go into the world is going to either shine a light – or cast a shadow – on their entire future.”

“If they don’t have access to things that other children do have access to, not only will they live the consequences of that denial of their rights, they’ll also be blamed for the conditions that they live in, and be further stigmatized.” Five years is simply too long to wait.

This is what I want to reinforce here about funding: “Malone argued this delay isn’t an issue of scarce resources. She said it’s an issue of how the government chooses to spend the resources it has, and what it prioritizes.

“Over and over again, in the choices that they make, they have shown us that we are not among their priorities.” That is utterly shameful.

I also want to highlight at this time, as I conclude this piece on the disability funding and support, and that is the labour market development assistance funding, and the squabble between the Liberal government here and the Liberal government in Ottawa last year. They threw our most vulnerable into that mix. That labour market development funding for community-supported employment – and I have 54 of those individuals in my district – it is one of the most, if not the most, beneficial funding programs in this province.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** There is a dignity for our most vulnerable in having employment. So

we must be careful with that funding, to ensure that we never, ever again put the most vulnerable in this province in the mix of a squabble over funding.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** I want to highlight the comments from the COD NL – the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities Newfoundland and Labrador – and that was Nancy Reid, what she said about the budget from yesterday: Nothing in the budget that will be created or discussed. Nothing with regard to the ministers' mandate. Nothing there for us.

Speaker, I'd now like to turn to housing for a while. Let me begin by saying that every Newfoundlander and Labradorian deserves the right to have a safe home that they can afford. Housing is a basic human need. The Liberals lack of planning produced a housing crisis on their own. So what is the housing situation in the province today?

Thousands are on the wait-list for homes with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. People who want to buy homes, especially young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, can't afford to. Vacancy rates for rentals are impossibly low. We have people couch surfing while looking for a place to stay. Our shelters are full.

Most unfortunately, we've seen it, homeless people living in tents in the fall and winter, and before that, on the grassy fields across the street here, until the government actually sent in the police to move them – shameful.

An investigative reporter discovered that hundreds of new homes the government proclaimed had been built, in fact only a grand total of 11 last year were built.

Current units owned by the Housing Corporation sit vacant and unrepaired because the government can't get around to fixing them, despite severe housing

shortage. Vulnerable people are living in unsafe dwellings because the alternative is a tent.

Too many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians cannot find a safe and affordable place to live. That impacts their quality of life, and limits opportunity for family growth, community growth and economic sustainability. Without an adequate housing supply, people are left with limited options and homelessness will continue to rise.

Newly advertised rental units have long lists of people applying. The real estate market does not have enough supply which drives prices up, and home ownership is increasingly hard to achieve. Many young people are living with their parents, or roommates, while dreaming – just dreaming – of home ownership. Seniors are struggling to keep up with the cost of heating and maintaining their large family homes. They want to continue to live independently, but say their existing home is too big for them.

We believe that everyone needs a home, not just a roof over their head. We also realize that housing is a continuum which follows a person over their lifetime. Because there's a housing shortage all across this continuum, the number of people moving and freeing up homes for others has stalled.

The Liberal solution was to lease a hotel from their friends. Yes, they signed a sole-source contract for three years to lease this building from their friends – a blank cheque from our taxpayer account. The Liberals never issued a public call for proposals. They leased this hotel with no plan, no housing staff and, in fact, let it sit empty for months until a not-for-profit operator stepped in – unreal.

The Liberals are tearing down houses instead of repairing them. Now, on housing, I want to highlight four things that you really, I guess, need and housing requires an integrated plan. So I think most of us

realize, you know, to have a house you need land, and we have significant challenges with Crown Lands that is holding up people that want to build and economic activity.

The other one is permits. I've had a couple of companies in my district that were delayed several months for a quarry permit. That delay prevented a number of houses from being built last summer.

We also then need material, so lumber, windows, et cetera. We have a number of Newfoundland and Labrador companies that are looking to hire and that are in a position to help support that housing need, particularly, some sawmills if they were provided additional forestry allocation.

The other thing that we need in building a house, we need labour and we have a shortage of trades. We have to reinvest in our trades across carpentry, plumbing. With all of that, then we need to look at housing across a continuum and across the total supply factors that are required.

Before I leave housing, I will touch on what my colleague highlighted two days ago with regard to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing tearing down more badly needed homes. That was the MHA for Cape St. Francis.

He highlighted and was critical of the Liberal government over the consistent 200 NLC units that are vacant and in need of repairs with some 3,000 – can you believe it – low-income families waiting for housing. Wouldn't that cause government to expedite, now, repairing those homes? There is currently a 1.5 vacancy rate in St. John's and rent costs have exploded amid tight inventories.

"The waitlist has doubled in the past five years while these units sat empty for several months and became vandalized," said the MHA for Cape St. Francis. "It is ironic that another four units in the

neighbourhood were sold off by the Liberals after sitting empty for over a year. Why can't we get these units fixed and give families keys?"

"The numbers don't lie. The Liberals have consistently failed to properly manage our housing inventory. Let's not forget that this government allowed 32 Units in Corner Brook to decay and they had to be torn down." While the minister of the day boasted about 750 new homes being constructed, media eventually exposed the truth that it was only 11.

We need a sense of urgency. We need to ensure that the tradespeople there with Newfoundland Housing are available and are hired so that we can expedite the repair and provide more families keys.

I'd now like to talk about health care access. The 2021 red book promised a new approach to health care to provide better outcomes to increase patient satisfaction rates and to deliver services to meet the needs of people in communities across the province. Now, that sounds wonderful on the surface but, again, that is just rhetoric because we are in a health care crisis and so many of you across the province know that.

Every Newfoundlander and Labradorian deserves timely access to quality health care service. Sadly, that is not the case thanks to this government. In fact, studies show our province ranks the lowest in Canada for access to health care. This is from a VOXM article two months ago, "Newfoundland and Labrador Ranks Lowest In Canada for Healthcare Access Study Finds."

"A new study by the C.D. Howe Institute shows Newfoundland and Labrador's health care system is last among the provinces and territories in terms of access to care and second to last in preventative care.

“The study also found that a high proportion of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians didn’t have access to dental care, home care, and prescription drugs because of the cost.

“Eighty-two per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians claimed regular access to a family doctor, below the Canadian average of 86 per cent and well below the International average. Junior Policy Analyst with C.D. Howe, Tingting Zhang says access to care drags Newfoundland and Labrador’s overall health care performance down.” Newfoundland and Labrador and Nunavut are showing the weakest outcomes. Their conclusion in the report shows that access to care is a national priority to improve our healthcare performance. Newfoundland and Labrador scored below the international average for all the categories.

Now, I want to highlight what was in the budget yesterday with regard to improving service delivery. This is on page 13 in the budget for those that are following along. “As part of our plan to create a more effective and efficient system, we are presently in the construction phase of an ambulatory care clinic and two urgent care centres on the Northeast Avalon to provide improved services to 50 per cent of the province’s population.”

So my question for this government: Where is the plan for the other 50 per cent of the population?

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

**L. PADDOCK:** Where is the plan for rural Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

**L. PADDOCK:** The 2021 red book promised that they would be expanding health care workforce development by attracting new physicians and other medical professionals. Let’s have a little reality check.

Since then many physicians have left their practices saying their administrative burdens are unmanageable and they are not receiving proper support from government. Nurses are insulted that temporary travel nurses from outside the province are paid more than nurses who already work here. The government continues to refuse to offer jobs to in-demand medical professionals at the start of their programs of study when they are planning where they will practice and live after graduating.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association says 163,000 people in this province do not have a family doctor. ERs are regularly closed because of a lack of medical professionals. Health care in this province is indeed in crisis and people needing care are suffering. Newfoundland and Labrador deserves better.

Now, with regard to access to care, I want to highlight what was promised in my own district 11 months ago, and that was a clinic in LaScie and a clinic in Triton. How long does it take to establish those clinics? The need for those clinics is there because, if we invest in both areas with a nurse practitioner and have those clinics, it will take the pressure off the regional hospitals and then, it will take the pressure off the hospital in Central Newfoundland in Grand Falls-Windsor. We simply need more front-line care.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** I’d now like to highlight from the Nurses’ Union, this was a CBC article from three weeks back: Overfilled emergency rooms and rising violence are threatening nurses in N.L., the Nurses’ Union said.

Eleven nurses recently left a surgical unit at St. Clare’s Mercy Hospital due to working conditions. The Nurses’ Union say staff-to-patient ratios are needing a review to prevent unsafe workplaces.

“A nurses' union rep says nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador are now dealing with a rise in violence in overfilled emergency departments, and is calling for mandated nurse-to-patient ratio to create safer workloads for members.

“Yvette Coffey, president of the Registered Nurses' Union of Newfoundland and Labrador, says hospitals are running over capacity, with patients placed in beds in hallways” – I've heard the stories – “due to overflowing emergency rooms.

“Despite that surge in demand, the number of nurses taking care of those patients has stayed the same, Coffey said.” Our nurses, she said, are getting burned out, and we need to have safe staffing.

She also highlighted: The acuity of patients in hospitals has also increased significantly, noting hospital beds would previously hold patients with less severe health problems, like someone recovering from a knee surgery. These days are behind us. That's an outpatient procedure, and all the beds are filled with the sickest of the sick, she said.

“The first thing we need is that core staffing review to know how many nurses should actually be on the unit or in one area.”

I also want to highlight and reiterate what she said in response to yesterday's budget. This is from the Registered Nurses' Union President Yvette Coffey. Coffey highlighted there should have been an allocation to hire new nursing graduates.

We should have offered a permanent, not casual, not part-time, but full-time job to every single nursing grad this year.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** She also said she “hoped to see a larger investment in recruiting and retention efforts for registered nurses, nurse

practitioners and other health care professionals.”

There is just so many things that the government missed, said Coffey. Bottomline, from the president of the Nurses' Union, government has failed to meet the moment – sad.

Before I leave health care professionals, I want to talk about one that is near and dear to a lot of us, because I've seen them in action up close and that is nurse practitioners. The 2021 red book promised to expand health care workforce development by increasing the number of nurse practitioners to provide care across our communities; however, the Liberals have refused to cover the cost of primary care that nurse practitioners provide in their clinics, meaning patients needing this care at a nurse practitioner's office must pay out of their own pockets.

By contrast, visits to family doctors are covered by medicare. With the Newfoundland Medical Association saying that 163,000 – can you imagine – Newfoundlanders and Labradorians without a family doctor, many people now count on nurse practitioners to provide this primary care. Why they are also looking for that primary care with them is because it is front-line access.

Sadly, because the government forces people to pay for this care, those who cannot afford it do without it. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve better. They deserve front-line care.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** Even the federal government said nurse practitioners should be paid by the government for primary health care services, yet the Minister of Health still refuses. Why? We asked the minister on March 5 this year. His response: Fee-for-service does not work for primary

care. It does not work for primary care physicians. I do not propose to have anything to do with it when it comes to nurse practitioners – unbelievable. People should not have to pay out of pocket to see a nurse practitioner.

Now, I'm former military, and we use, really, that nurse practitioner for front-line support. It works. I've also been across the North in Canada and that is the motto across the nursing stations in the north, that again is highly successful. We need that motto now here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** I'd now like to touch on medical transportation. The 2021 red book said that Liberals "will continue to support families who must travel for medical care ...." Reality check: Many people needing medical transportation assistance cannot get it and cannot afford their share.

No one is suffering more than Labradorians, whose flight costs within their province are more expensive than flights to Europe. People are skipping appointments because they cannot afford to get there, and that is placing their health at risk.

Our province has a very dispersed rural population, so adequate coverage for medical transportation is essential if we are to ensure people get the care they need when they need it. This government's failures are undermining the health of our people, and life expectancy is falling. Again, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve better.

I'd like to highlight with regard to the transportation cost what my colleague from Torngat Mountains has highlighted with the cost from Labrador. She highlighted that again in the fall with a press release, that travel costs to Labrador is very much a barrier to health care access.

Evans noted Labradorians are being gouged when it comes to airline prices. The average airfare from Nain to Happy Valley-Goose Bay is a staggering \$1,245, and a trip to St. John's cost close to \$2,500. This significant increase in travel cost stunts Labrador's economic growth, quality of health care and our ability to even access health care. She emphasized a need for action.

These prices pose a formidable barrier for families seeking essential health care services that are not readily accessible through government programs. Not everyone has large amounts of cash in their bank accounts to draw upon if their family is faced with a medical emergency. So what message is the government sending to Labradorians? Our PC caucus has long advocated for policies that would alleviate these burdens on Labradorians.

We must prioritize the health of our communities, ensuring that travel costs do not hinder access to essential care that is vital for the well-being of all Labradorians. It's time for our government to take a serious look at how we can support residence in remote areas, ensuring all Labradorians can access travel for medical purposes when needed.

Now, moving away from health care, I'd now like to talk a little bit about business and industry and a red tape reduction for a pro-business approach. First, on internal trade and tariffs, unjustified tariffs and threats of tariffs from the US are a direct threat to Canadian workers and industry. We will not stand by while our people and our economy are put at risk. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians know what it means to be resilient. We've weathered many storms and we're ready to stand together again. The threats haven't gone away, and we cannot back down. We are ready to stand up for our workers, for our industries, and for our future.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** So, on that, with the opportunities that we have in front of us across our resource sectors, now is the opportunity to do more to grow and strengthen our natural resources. Sectors that are rich with opportunity here in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's why we've always supported the doubling of oil and gas development in our province and for strong federal support for the development and export of LNG. These projects can drive significant real economic growth, reduce our reliance on other nations and help secure our province's energy and economic security.

We must not fall behind in seeking immediate and targeted support for our seafood sector, the backbone of many rural communities. Our world-class seafood products must not be ignored. We have a comparative advantage with our seafood sector. Our PC Party will continue to push for meaningful engagement with all stakeholders to ensure we have a viable, sustainable and profitable fishing industry for generations to come.

At the same time, we must work hand in hand with our business community to explore new markets, diversify our trade relationships and do everything we can to grow our economy. Not just here in Newfoundland and Labrador, but across Canada.

Hope is not a plan of action. We must start taking action. By standing strong here at home, we will send a clear message. We won't be pushed around by any foreign leader, and we won't be left behind. As always, we are committed to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, to protecting our jobs, growing our economy and securing a better and brighter future for all of us. How the province and country respond to tariffs and the threat of tariffs has the potential to make or break many of our businesses here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So what do we think we need? First and foremost, we need to cut down on all the needless barriers that businesses face when they are trying to do business. Newfoundland and Labrador should be the easiest place to do business in Canada. Government regulations should not stand in the way when businesses from this province try to expand, sell their products or bid on projects in other provinces.

The fact that rules from province to province cost business owners too much time and money. Changing rules is a very real deterrent to expansion and impedes selling products to other provinces.

Food that is approved for sale in one province should be approved for sale in all provinces. We have many local beef producers in this province who cannot export their high-quality products to other provinces. Nor can they sell to large grocery chains, because this province does not have a federally regulated slaughterhouse.

But if the red tape was removed and this principle followed, these food producers could expand their markets, grow their businesses, hire more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and grow our home-grown beef industry.

Professionals who are certified in one province should be certified in all. When workers and businesses from this province go elsewhere to work on projects, they shouldn't have to take on any additional safety training. Because they are already trained. They should not have to apply for another licence if they're already licensed.

Trucking industry: The trucking industry shouldn't have to deal with different regulations when it comes to weight restrictions, brakes, tires. These regulations increase the cost of getting products in and out of our province. We know that close to 80 per cent of our foodstuff is brought in, and the trucking industry regulations are a significant impact on us.

The federal government should also lower the cost of Marine Atlantic to make it easier and cheaper to get goods in and out of this province.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** They need to respect the terms of union. We are geographically isolated from the rest of the country. That's a fact. That's a challenge to doing business. It shouldn't be worsened by high ferry costs.

The vast majority of products, goods and services should be able to flow freely from one province to another without additional licensing fees, taxes or regulatory requirements.

When it comes to government procurement, when taxpayer funds are used, Canadian supplies should be used. The same is here in Newfoundland and Labrador with local Newfoundland and Labrador being selected whenever possible. We should be keeping and growing the amount of money circulating in the Canadian and local economies. It is simply the right thing to do.

On government procurement, I'll highlight a couple of things that I think we have opportunities where we can further make headway and improvements, and that is a greater use of our agricultural products and a greater use of our construction material products in the province.

The summer tourism season is about to arrive. People from across Canada are now choosing where they will spend their money this summer. I believe it should be our province. We should be advocating for Canadians to come here this summer. We should be supporting local tourism operators and promoting them. We should be helping them overcome challenges they face to prepare for our visitors. We should be advocating for more air routes into the province and not just into St. John's.

Now, on business, we need to remove roadblocks. Why? Because local businesses are the heart and soul of our communities. They play a vital role in provincial economic growth. They are truly the engine. The stronger businesses are, the stronger our economy becomes. It's that simple. Reducing the cost of running a business is key to growing a business. This is where governments can step in. Tariffs or no tariffs, government should make it easier and cheaper to do business, not harder, more regulation which makes it, in the end, more expensive.

We all know the many ways that government decisions and policies can impact a business from different fees and taxes to a long and dragged-out process that we refer to as red tape. We need to be aggressive in a red tape reduction plan and slash unnecessary red tape.

The red tape angle must end and, like I said, I've known a couple of businesses in my area that were delayed opening because they were waiting on a permit. There needs to be a sense of urgency in government in supporting small businesses. I also have a motel out in my area where a person wants to invest close to \$1 million and he is waiting on a permit and looking then, with that, to hire as much as 20 people.

The province leads the country in red tape. Our leader has been clear, he wants to lead the country in red tape reduction. In fact, for five years now our province has been given an F grade; that's a failing grade by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This is a very sad commentary.

For the past five years, the Liberals have simply failed the business community. Our party will also reform the payroll tax and eventually eliminate the tax on full-time employees. Lowering the payroll tax will reduce the tax burden on local businesses and encourage business owners to prioritize full-time hiring – encouraging businesses to

hire, not penalizing them for adding staff, has to be the way ahead.

We will review all taxes and fees, with the goal to put money back into the pockets of local businesses. That, in itself, will be another economic multiplier. Tax relief should allow businesses to reinvest in their operations, hire more staff and develop new products. Red tape reduction will make it easier to start and grow a business.

We want to cultivate a stronger and more prosperous business community. Government should be helping, not hindering, the business sector. We will use the business navigators to inform where the red tape is and then we will slash it. We will also expand the Business Navigator Program to be available on weekends and evenings when a lot of entrepreneurs are available, because we know, like I said, business owners don't clock out at 4 p.m.

Our PC Party will create a pro-business environment and let the world know we are open for both investment and growth.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** We will do jurisdictional scans. We will learn from the successes and failures of other provinces and other countries. There is no pattern on good ideas. Nova Scotia has made significant headway in cutting red tape and I will also highlight Finland has made significant progress in microloan programs for small communities. Let's not forget that a government's job is to remove the obstacles that block the path to business growth and sustainability.

Here on the PC side, we will work with this business community to eliminate barriers and create a better path to growth and prosperity.

Now, I want to highlight what two of the business entities said about the budget. This is Jessica McCormick from the Newfoundland Federation of Labour, "When

it comes to tariff threats, there was nothing significant in terms of austerity measures, and she felt it lacked a real and bold vision for the economy of the province."

This is from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation: More of the same from the provincial government as last year. Essentially what we've been saying: a recycled budget.

So let's look at growing our economy and creating opportunities. We also need to find ways to diversify our economy, not just our markets, but also our internal economy. We value oil and gas, and we understand the important role in our economy. In fact, we view it as opportunity for our LNG, especially since Germany has built six LNG offload terminals over the past year and a half.

We also need to maximize other opportunities we have before us, like the potential to further expand our tourism sector. This includes our fishery; it must not be forgotten. We need to maximize our fishery. It's not getting the attention it deserves. I refer to what my colleague from Bonavista said: The fishery could be double – double – what it is currently –

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

**L. PADDOCK:** – with the right government plan. We will help find new opportunities; we will be in our communities and work with the people on the ground to develop strategies to revitalize our rural areas. We must get back to driving growth by developing individual strategies to encourage prosperity in sectors like ocean tech, where we have a comparative advantage, IT, and mining where we have the resources. We need regional economic development strategies, which are crucial for our rural communities. It fosters job creation, strengthens connections and enhances local services.

I note in 2018 this Liberal government paid \$1 million to McKinsey for economic

development strategies which nothing came of. A region-by-region approach will ensure that each region of this province has a sustainable and prosperous future, with a strong economy and with amenities and services readily available.

A renewed focus on regional development is essential to ensure a vibrant future for all residents and businesses alike. I want to highlight not everything is the same. There are some opportunities here that can be further capitalized upon. In the last few years, without really government support, we've seen rural manufacturing do work in Newfoundland and Labrador, in what Superior Glove has achieved in both Point Leamington and Springdale. We need to better understand, and government also needs to better understand what we offer as a comparative advantage.

I'd now like to highlight some of our renewable megaprojects. I'd like to start with the fishery. It is the most important industry in our province. The 2021 red book stated the Liberal Party is best positioned to lead our fishing industry. I question that. Managing the transition to greater groundfish activity, investigating threats and opportunities in shellfish and seal industries – I think that's the only time I've ever seen it mentioned with regard to seals – and growing a high-quality, high-value industry that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can be proud of.

This is the third year in a row that the start of the crab fishery was in jeopardy. Last year, the budget had to be laid because fish harvesters were met with police in riot gear as they tried to meet with the Premier. We, on the PC Party side, will establish a stand-alone fishery department.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** We understand the importance of the fishery on which tens of thousands depend.

I will also highlight, with the fishery, the economic impact of it is not just felt in those rural communities. They're spending money in Grand Falls, Gander, Clarenville, Corner Brook and St. John's. If the fishery hurts, the entire province suffers. Only with a seat at the table, nationally, can we begin to gain control of our fishery. A new PC government will continue to push for shared decision-making in our fishery, to ensure our fishery is managed in the best interest of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

As I noted, our fishery is a renewable resource, and each fish harvester is really a small business. Significant opportunity, as I noted, remains for our fishery and aquaculture activities if government was more proactive.

I want to highlight a couple TACs, that's the total allowable catch, and the need to reestablish them. First, is on the mackerel side. Mackerel was a \$300-million fishery for Newfoundland and Labrador. Add in the economic multiplier and you're looking at close to a billion-dollar impact. Fish harvester Jones provided an incredible and detailed overview of the research to support the TAC for mackerel. That has fallen on deaf ears both provincially and federally. The TAC for mackerel is justified and needs to be re-established.

The TAC for 3K crab this year was reduced 25 per cent, and we've seen conflicting science data between the pot survey and the trawl survey. The pot survey supported, really, a maintenance of the TAC, whereas the bottom trawl survey was slightly off for various reasons, some of it because cod was eating the bait.

I say to the government side – and the Minister of Fisheries even noted that fish harvester Gillett from Twillingate made a very strong case with regard to the pot survey and maintaining what was the current TAC. We need to listen to the fish harvesters. We have an opportunity now, as soon as the season starts, to look at their

pot catches from the first couple weeks, and then petition DFO again to increase that TAC back to where it sits.

More importantly for both mackerel and crab, we need to listen to the fish harvesters, and what they are seeing on the water. Every catch that they make is, indeed, a scientific assessment that should be used.

We also must ensure that the inshore fishery remains the primary beneficiary for any northern cod TAC increase. With that, if there is an increase, we need to look at increasing the processing licence and look at areas where it can be done in the communities adjacent to it, like in my own area on the Baie Verte Peninsula. We need to look at markets for seals.

Two final things I want to highlight with regard to the fishery and that is we need to understand the fishery frustration now with e-logs. We're adding in a significant change: the electronic logs. We probably need a bunch of Fishery Department personnel to spend a few days at sea to understand the life of a fish harvester. Then they might understand the challenges of them and for some of them that have not been around technology to fully embrace that technology, it should be brought in over a period of time, not forced down the throats of our fish harvesters.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** The other point I will make on fishing, and that is on the aquaculture side, we also need to push back on the Marine Protected Areas. We need to be able to continue to grow our aquaculture industry. On one hand, we're saying that, yet on the other hand we've got both levels of government supporting the MPAs, the Marine Protected Areas.

Forestry is another renewable megaproject. In my own district on Green Bay and Baie Verte, we have a number of wood

operations that support operations to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. We also have a number of local sawmills. Those local sawmills now need additional allocation and, with it, they can support our housing prices and they can support demand that they have across Central Newfoundland to support the mining industry.

Government, from our forestry operation, can then receive fees from timber harvesting, increase fees from company taxes, personal income tax. This is a further economic driver for the province if we were to be smart about helping some of our sawmill operators.

Another of our renewable megaprojects is agriculture. The 2021 red book promised to increase food security, saying they will continue to support the growth of our agriculture sector and meet the goal of increasing provincial food security to 20 per cent by 2022.

Yet, where are we? Food prices continue to rise and healthy food available has continued to be a challenge. That is worse in northern and remote communities. If it's bad in metro, imagine the sticker shock at grocery stores in Labrador and in other rural locations. People simply cannot afford to eat healthy food.

As I previously noted, the food banks are stretched. When the food banks are stretched to the breaking point and many are going hungry, including thousands of seniors and children, why didn't the government provide a new plan to ensure our food banks, food kitchens and social supply networks have the resources – just even a little increase in resources – to meet the growing needs of hungry people in this province?

Speaker, across Newfoundland and Labrador, farmers want to expand. From root vegetable farming to hydroponics to lettuce to raising cattle, there is a desire to produce more locally. However, across all of

that, they continue to be challenged with government roadblocks.

I have a case in my own district. Corner Brook Pulp and Paper is holding two small farms hostage, wanting a fee for timber rights. Why can't the government give Corner Brook Pulp and Paper – Kruger – another allocation and let those two small farms grow?

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

**L. PADDOCK:** We have the highest rate of food insecurity in Canada, with one in four residents having difficulty accessing food. We need to support more farming and, on that, in being able to take care of our own and be smart about our own opportunities for farming, we need to support a federally regulated slaughterhouse, and the MHA for Exploits highlighted that a month ago. He called on the Liberal government to take real action to support farmers and strengthen secondary food processing in our province.

The vast majority of our food comes from outside with 20 per cent locally produced. Now, more than ever, we must invest in food security here at home, said Forsey. Our local farmers work hard to feed our communities, yet they continue to face unnecessary –

**SPEAKER (Trimper):** Order, please!

I just remind the Member not to use the family names of the Members –

**L. PADDOCK:** Okay, sorry.

**SPEAKER:** Even if you're reading, you need to refer to the district.

That's the second time, so thank you.

**L. PADDOCK:** We must invest in food security here at home, said the MHA for Exploits.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** “Our local farmers work hard to feed our communities, yet they continue to face unnecessary barriers because of Liberal inaction.”

One key step the MHA for Exploits highlighted should be to immediately take efforts to facilitate the establishment of a federally regulated slaughterhouse. Without such a facility, local beef producers are restricted in their ability to access national grocery chains, limiting their market opportunities and the availability of locally raised beef for Newfoundland and Labrador residents.” Why can't we help ourself?

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

**L. PADDOCK:** “A federally regulated slaughterhouse would be a game changer for our province's beef industry.”

“It would open doors for local producers, create jobs, and increase food security by keeping more of our food supply within the province.”

I'd now like to switch over to tourism and then, really, just talk about, for a couple of minutes, my district. Scenic Green Bay and the historic Baie Verte Peninsula offer significant untapped tourism potential. It is abundantly clear that history, geography and a sense of place intertwine daily over a salt (inaudible), however, road safety issues are impacting our tourism potential. Case in point: we must ensure that both residents and tourists can at least see the road signs.

There was worked promised on Route 391 and 392 11 months ago. Unfortunately, it was not in the plan. So I'm hoping the minister has a separate plan for what was promised 11 months ago. We also have Route 413 and 419 and they need investment. These are potentially game changers for the tourism opportunities in those communities, because what has been written and what has been shown to me is

that these are great communities to visit, and what people are putting up on Facebook: Great communities to visit but don't go there because you're going to damage your vehicle. We need a plan. We need a multi-year plan to be able to fix our secondary roads.

Now I'm going to talk about a non-renewable resource where there is an opportunity for significant economic development for our province.

The red book promised to invest in the expansion of secondary processing for mining, strengthening jobs, businesses and communities, particularly in rural regions. It stated, "We will identify high-potential opportunities for extraction and secondary processing, and review our regulatory regime to ensure timely and responsible development." Timely development – I think you need to go back and ask Valentine Lake and the owners there what they think about the meaning of the word timely.

Secondary processing: although this province had bounds of minerals and mineral production, opportunities for value-added processing are being lost. The federal government has made huge investments in battery manufacturing operations elsewhere in Canada, but where are the secondary processing investments in this province – a province where the mineral wealth and the investments are great.

I'll give you an overview now, not just my district, but the entirety of Central Newfoundland with regards to mining. The area continues to be a notable focal point of activity, and that legacy goes back 150 years, which is now being further advanced through the efforts of FireFly in Ming's Bight area and Maritime Resources with the Hammerdown project, with other names about to emerge. We should be, now with this opportunity in front of us, on the cusp of a major, major mining boom with better government planning.

Where are the opportunities? We have New Found Gold in Appleton, the purest gold find in North America. We have Valentine Lake, which was just recently acquired by Equinox Gold and that they're hoping to get into production within the next few months – a 500-person mine with significant economic multiplier across Central Newfoundland. We have the Beaver Brook Antimony Mine, just the other side of Glenwood. We have on the King's Point road, Maritime Resources and Hammerdown, a gold mine. The mine is there. It's permeating. We need to be able to push that along.

Then, we have FireFly – what was Rambler – at the intersection of Ming's Bight and the La Scie Highway, and they are going into economic review within the province within the next couple of months. That needs to be expedited because there's an opportunity now with the base metals for copper to take advantage of that. If we push this along, we are on our path to a 400-person mine.

All of this is interconnected. With all of the mining opportunities that I've noted, probably close to 2,000 direct mining jobs and, on top of that, you have significant indirect jobs for drilling and the like – catering – so first of all, we need a plan. We need a plan for labour. We don't have the labour to meet the entire mining need in this province.

On top of that, where are they going to live? We need a plan for housing to be able to meet all of that. We also need to continue to push for the complete elimination of the carbon tax because our miners will not be as productive as others across North America if we're facing a carbon tax regime.

In a number of areas, we need road improvements to be able to support more trucks travelling along those paths, and I highlight Routes 390, 410 and 418 that need specific investments. In fact, Route 390 I was on four days ago, 85 potholes from King's Point to Springdale. The minister asked for the number one priority in

January, that was the number one priority that I submitted, I believe, and it was not in the initial plan. Shameful.

The Liberal's track record on financial responsibility: People at home should be asking are the Liberals being responsible with my taxpayer dollars? There is only one answer to that, no. Here's why: The Fraser Institute ranks Newfoundland and Labrador Liberals last in the country on fiscal performance.

The Fraser Institute ranked the Newfoundland government last based on three factors: government spending, taxes and debt and deficits. They used a quantitative process. Newfoundland and Labrador under this Liberal government ranked last overall, last in taxes and second last in deficits and debt. These aren't my stats; these are from the nationally renowned Fraser Institute.

I'm now going to highlight, and I think it's important to do, especially to remind the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador how full that gillnet is with past examples of fiscal waste, and there are many – they are indeed many.

The Liberals often ring their hands saying they wish they had more money to do more for people. This is hard to believe because during the past 10 years in office, they have been spending approximately \$10 billion a year – so \$100 billion if you multiple that by 10 – and it was their job to spend that money wisely, but instead, they have misspent and wasted huge sums of money through poor management and truly questionable choices.

Let's look at the travel nurse contract, a sole-source contract totalling some \$100 million a year, most of all which could have been saved if they had done what was needed to retain the health care professionals that we already have or hired nurses coming out of Memorial with a full-time job. This crisis of lost doctors and

nurses and other professionals happened on the Liberal watch. You only have to let it happen but you also caused it to happen, and then, you have to spend a fortune to close the huge gaps your failed policies have created. This is simply not the way that our health care system needs to be run.

Another example of financial mismanagement is the way health care infrastructure projects have been mishandled. For all the funding allocated, the Western Memorial health care system was underbuilt compared to the need. That spurred the minister to propose doubling up seniors in rooms right at the opening of that building. This happened, even though it was long known that the province's population was rapidly aging. We need and still need more spaces for seniors' care, not less.

We also learned the new mental health and addictions care facility was underbuilt with fewer beds than the Waterford that it replaced. This is despite the obvious urgent need for mental health care and addictions treatment. Why was it underbuilt?

Liberals gave a \$21 million contract plus operating costs to their friends to lease a hotel for three years to treat people with complex needs, but they also left that facility vacant for quite a period of time. Finally, the transitional housing agreement signed to lease the airport Comfort Inn, for almost six times the property's value, the City of St. John's property attachment shows that the property in question is valued at \$3.7 million.

The Liberals entered into a sole-source exclusive for \$7 million a year – \$21 million in total – to provide up to 140 transitional housing beds. In January of last year, that facility was 80 per cent empty. In the first three months, \$4 million was spent on temporary housing with a hotel owned by a Liberal friend that housed only 11 people at that time.

Related to addictions care of course is the lack of a new penitentiary. The 2021 red book promised a new penitentiary would be completed by 2025. Instead it hasn't even started. That's despite the fact that some \$150 million in federal funding was earmarked and available to get the work going. Even the Minister of Justice seemed to not know that this funding was there. So instead of getting criminals off the streets and into addictions care, since most inmates have mental or addictions issues, we see the revolving door that places offenders right back on the streets without any treatment jeopardizing everyone's safety.

Then we have the new infrastructure announcements such as the replacement for St. Clare's. The government commissioned an objective study to determine the best design and placement for such a hospital but, before the results were in, it jumped the gun, repurchasing the land that it just sold with a huge premium to the beneficiaries of that deal. This is no way to properly manage the limited financial resources of the people of the province. It is taxpayers' money, scrapping due diligence and making billion-dollar plans on the back of an envelope to benefit political friends.

Then we have the one that really blows my mind. The Liberals gave \$171,000 to a bottom tier UK soccer team to promote immigration, but the move resulted in zero immigrants and less than 5 per cent of the website attention the minister falsely claimed it generated. Access to information, ATIPP, revealed none of the 900 residents of the UK who contacted the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills have moved to our province.

The Liberals allowed OilCo Crown corporation, over the past decade, to waste exorbitant funds. This will pain spending authorities. It was completely out of control. Then there is the \$5-million Rothschild report the province commissioned to explore the possibility of selling publicly

owned assets, like offshore equity stakes, Marble Mountain, the Liquor Corporation and so forth. Nothing has materialized for that five-million-dollar bill, and we have no idea what the report recommended.

So the question is, Speaker, why are we not aware of the recommendations? There's one reason, and one reason only: Because the government has hidden the findings from public view. They didn't even have the good sense to put the document in the hands of an independent third party, such as the Auditor General, to ensure that another set of eyes on the recommendations for the benefits or potential benefits of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians could be reviewed.

What is to prevent another fire sale of valuable assets to friends of the Liberal Party in power? The way that they have benefited their friends with their hotel deal, land deals and a recent land purchase. Who is going to look out for the best interests of taxpayers when this government is instead continuing to look out for the best interests of their political friends?

I could go on. The gill net is full. Listen, if you've ever –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** The fish is low quality, though.

**L. PADDOCK:** Okay, let me talk about – it is. Let me just give you the metaphor of being at sea, hauling up a herring net for someone that had passed, so the net had been in the water for a few days. When that net was hauled up, it was full. But it reeked – it reeked.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** This is where we are now with the Liberals and their continuing economic expenditures. It reeks of a lack of accountability; it reeks of poor decision-making; it simply just reeks to every Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** I could go on. But my point is that the Liberals clearly have not been good fiscal managers. They have been given failing grades. They have continued to ignore the Auditor General and they have simply wasted too much taxpayer money. Clearly, it's time for change.

As I wrap up my remarks for today, Speaker, I've said it before but I believe it bears repeating. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve more from this budget. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador simply deserve better. As I said earlier, when I talked about the funding of the offices in Grand Falls-Windsor helping some of our food hampers, budgets are about choices. It is not Liberal money; it is taxpayer money.

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

**L. PADDOCK:** Every dollar that is used is an opportunity cost – every dollar. They should be about making smart choices, particularly in a period of crisis that we are in globally. The Liberal government had a chance to make smart choices. Choices that would make life better for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and help diversify our province, they have failed. In fact, the budget from yesterday missed the mark on all of it.

The budget is a recycled document, filled with reannouncements from a tired Liberal government that has clearly run out of ideas. A government that continues to have no plan – no plan – to address the issues facing our province. Very little has changed with yesterday's budget, Speaker.

The people across all of Newfoundland and Labrador now needs real leadership. Leadership that will make better choices to make life more affordable, improve access to health care, diversify our economy and create safer communities across the entire

province. Our party is ready – clearly ready – and able to provide that leadership.

On that note, I will now take my seat and I look forward to speaking on this budget again and to further participate in this important debate because it impacts the future of our province.

Thank you.

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

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, that is going to be one hard act to follow, spoken on behalf of my colleague.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Absolutely fantastic words, he speaks the truth. But I'll say to my colleague from Baie Verte - Green Bay who just gave an amazing response to the budget: Don't get too comfortable in that seat, Sir, because I look forward to you delivering the 2026-27 budget on that side of the floor.

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

**C. TIBBS:** So don't you get too comfortable, Sir; don't you get too comfortable at all.

Speaker, I'd like to take a minute and just tell a little personal story that I have from 2014. Back in 2014, my grandmother Budgell, who lives out on Caribou Road, she got ill. She developed a very aggressive cancer, and unfortunately, she died that year. But my mother and my aunts took care of her in her home, because there was nowhere to put her at that time. There were no places in the hospital, as people were dying in the hallways of hospitals, surrounded by strangers and hustle and bustle all day long. So they kept her at home.

One evening, she stopped breathing while my mother and my two aunts were there. They called the ambulance; the ambulance came. It was expected, but of course, it's my mother's mom, so it came as a great tragedy. The paramedics took her off the bed and put her on the floor in a cluttered room, with so many things around – in a dark, cold, cluttered room. One of the paramedics asked my mom, would you like us to try to save her? To do CPR on this mid-70-year-old woman, and try to save her? That was their job, that's what they had to ask her. My mom panicked and said, please, yes. Just bring my mom back however you can.

They did CPR on her, I'm not sure how long, but I can only imagine how tragic it was for my grandmother, as it was her last moments. They brought her to the hospital, they pronounced her, and my mother today, 11 years later, still lives with the grief and the guilt that she possibly made my poor grandmother's last few moments, unselfishly, of course, some of the worst moments of her life. That happened because my mother did not have the proper education, the proper know-how to know what should happen in those last moments.

So what did we do in Grand Falls-Windsor? We developed the first community hospice in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**C. TIBBS:** When I say we, it's a community. It's a province. It's as far from government as it should be. It's a community that fundraised for a decade to help bring the Lionel Kelland Hospice where it is today. In February, we welcomed our 100th resident to the hospice, and last week we celebrated one year for our community hospice here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**C. TIBBS:** We were the last province in all of Canada to have a community hospice.

But thanks to the likes of Ken Dicks, John Campbell, Dr. Cole and a full community, we have it. We're very proud of it. The hospice doesn't work as an infrastructure; it works because of the people that put everything into it every single day, and I'm so happy to have them there.

In the Lionel Kelland Hospice, if anybody has never, ever taken a little tour of it, I encourage anybody in government to do so. It is a state-of-the-art facility. It's got a state-of-the-art chapel. It's absolutely fantastic.

Years ago, up until the hospice was ready, people were dying in hallways of hospitals. Literally, while people were passing them with meals and everything else and trying to talk to them, they were dying in hallways. That's sad and we should be ashamed of that.

Today in Lionel Kelland Hospice, these rooms are state of the art. There are cuddle beds so you can lay next to your loved one. You can bring your animals in there if you wish. You can play whatever music you wish. It's a private, intimate setting where somebody can truly die with the dignity that they should have. We're very proud of it.

There's a full kitchen there. So if your loved one wants their last few meals to be special, they absolutely can. We've had some special times in Lionel Kelland Hospice. They've taken one gentleman, he wanted to have his last boil up. So what did they do? They brought in a Side by Side, they strapped that gentleman in, went across the river into the woods, lit a fire and they had a boil up a week before he passed.

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

**C. TIBBS:** We've had weddings there. We've had big screen movies there where people can bring their families in and just really truly enjoy their last moments. We're all going to be there one day, so the Lionel Kelland Hospice, we're very lucky to have it in Newfoundland and Labrador and I am so

proud of my community that brought it together and it's fantastic.

This year's budget, I think, from what I read correctly was announced for \$2.3 million for the Lionel Kelland Hospice. It's not enough. It's not enough to keep the doors open in that place. Government knows this. The Department of Health knows this but, unfortunately, that number remained the same from last year or whereabouts. Lionel Kelland Hospice needs just south of \$3 million. They've sat down with a comprehensive plan, that's what they need.

Now, I was happy when my leader from Stephenville - Port au Port came in and said, basically, give me a cheque, how do I sign it one day? He said, what this place needs – after he toured it and he seen how important it was to our community, that was his message, whatever you need when our government is in place, you will have to continue the success of Lionel Kelland Hospice. I thank him for that –

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

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

**C. TIBBS:** Yes, exactly, and I'm so thankful for that and I'm so happy for that. So I know that the Lionel Kelland Hospice will be safe one day. I'm just not sure about now with the same funding we had last year, that didn't get us through this year, we had to get some bridge funding. I ask the government – the government knew this. They knew that months, at the last fiscal part of this year, have to be bridged, yet we got the same funding, why – why?

My colleague from Baie Verte - Green Bay talked about decisions. My office is in the provincial building in Grand Falls-Windsor, right below the Premier's office. I'm on the second floor, they're on the third floor right above me. The Premier's office is mostly empty than not. Most times there's nobody there. You can see a big sign when you go into my building: by appointment only.

So if we're going to spend a million dollars for four years on this, could some of that money have gone back into the Lionel Kelland Hospice? If there's no money, obviously it wasn't there for this year's budget, can we close that ridiculous office and put the money back into the taxpayers' pockets where it belongs?

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

**C. TIBBS:** Lionel Kelland Hospice, that's going to serve many more people and families than the Premier's office that's there today.

So we talk about decisions and different decisions can be made, of course, they can be made. I know what decisions we're going to make after this election. I can guarantee you it's going to be a much smarter decision than that, that's going to help the people of my district and of all Newfoundland and Labrador. So I couldn't be more than happy about that.

Just sticking with health care for a moment, the emergency room in Grand Falls-Windsor is constantly overrun. We've talked about it many, many times. I'm going to point somebody out here and he's going to kill me for doing it. Dr. John Campbell is the emergency room doctor our there. He also runs the hospice. I don't know if the man sleeps. I honestly don't know if the man sleeps. He is so back and forth it's not even funny.

How we're not pushing more into the Lionel Kelland Hospice, I don't know, and I will say this. We have a problem attracting health care professionals, obviously. The Lionel Kelland Hospice will help us with that. I didn't realize how many health care professionals truly want to work in that environment. I was amazed. Like I say, Dr. Campbell is a friend of mine. After working in a week of the ER and working in the week of the Lionel Kelland Hospice, it's like night and day. This is serenity for him over here, to be with people as they pass and

offer those services. I'm just so proud of the friends I have and the hospice that we have in there.

We get the diversions, still, from all over Central into the Grand Falls-Windsor hospital and that emergency room, my God, it's overrun. It's a sin. You think about why we can't retain or recruit people here, it's kind of a Catch-22. As people leave, it puts more pressure on the people that are there, that are actually holding up this impossible infrastructure, but they manage to do it.

I want to tell everybody in Grand Falls-Windsor and surrounding areas, wherever you come to work into the health care system in Grand Falls-Windsor, as your MHA, I am so proud of you. I couldn't be more proud of the work you're doing, holding it all together. God Bless you all.

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

**C. TIBBS:** We're talking about the budget, of course, and I'm going to take a quick moment to talk about roadwork. We've got some roadwork that needs to be done up the Buchans Highway, Route 370 and into Millertown, and it was on the list this year. I've been asking for it for six years and it's finally on the list this year. So I'm very, very happy about that.

What I don't see on the list this year is a plan to address the wrong-way traffic on the divided highway in Grand Falls-Windsor that happens every other weekend. It happened again last weekend. I believe when we were here three weeks ago, it happened that weekend as well. I have the video. It's absolutely unreal.

Somebody is going east in the eastbound lane, as they should, and a blue car whips right by them in the lane next to them. Can you imagine how scary that would be? That's a 90-kilometre an hour zone. I've offered many suggestions to government. Nothing yet. Six years, not one thing – not one thing.

Four years ago was the tragedy but we had it happening before that. Do you know what would happen today after all this attention, after the phone calls, the emails, the conversations I've had, the tears I've shed – because I know about the last fatality – if somebody was killed and we knew what was happening out there and we could prevent it? We could prevent it.

That's raw but it's real. I don't know, even after the advocacy I could do, if I could live with myself after that. It would be sad; but we have a full department that has known about this for four years and nothing's been done. There's no excuse for that. That's just lack of attention. Until what? Until another resident dies? It's sad; it shouldn't be that way.

In Grand Falls - Windsor we've had the fortune of having so much timber within our area. I mean, we had the mill there for the better part of a century. We've had people there that it's instilled into their blood. We've had third- and fourth-generation woodcutters out there and, unfortunately, the allotment continues to go to the big, big players – the two or three humongous players out there.

Now, I'm not coming down on those players. I want to see all Newfoundland and Labrador businesses be successful, big or not – I want to see them all – but I'll say this. For the amount of harvesters that we have out there, small harvesters, there is no reason why they should not get an allotment.

We have Jonathan Brown; he's an Indigenous third-generation woodcutter. He's been doing it since he's been a little boy with his dad and, this coming August, he will be out of wood and he will be out of permits. He employs about eight or 10 people – not a lot. A third generation, he's going to be out of work and have to close his business. Another business closing in Newfoundland and Labrador. Why? Because we can't take the allotment and

little pieces of that pie to ensure that these people remain sustainable as well. It's not fair. It's not fair.

I've got to give it up to our leader, once again, who talked to Jonathan Brown and assured him that, when he gets in there, he will ensure the process is done where everybody can get just a little bit maybe – just a little bit. I know the allotment is there but we need to take a look at it as just a bigger picture and we need to hold on to these small businesses, because it might not be a lot in the big picture but it is a lot in Central. That's part of our heritage and our culture as well.

Again, I applaud the bigger companies for the hard work that they've done over the years. There are some big companies here and I applaud them. I'm totally open to free enterprise, but we need to find a way to ensure that these smaller companies stay sustainable as well. Until we do that, we're going to see them moving on and it's just not fair.

I'm going to take a quick moment and talk about tourism in Central. We're coming up on the summer season here and there's no better place, in my opinion, than Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to tourism. We get people from all over the world. It's absolutely amazing to see.

In Grand Falls-Windsor, just between Grand Falls-Windsor and Badger, we have Rafting Newfoundland. That's whitewater rafting right here in Newfoundland and Labrador; locally owned. They hire locals. It's absolutely fantastic to see. You know, you go out and see seven or eight boats going down and everybody have their paddles in there and, by God, it's something to see. People absolutely love it. I've done it quite a few times with my family. I encourage anybody out there: Come on into Central, look up Rafting Newfoundland and you'll have the time of your life. I guarantee you.

Exploits Extreme Ziplines: That's another that just opened up last year or the year before. Again, locally owned; the guy out there, Chad Porter, fantastic guy, hires on a bunch of students – fantastic. I did it for the first time last summer and I tell you what, when you're whipping across the mighty Exploits River and you get to look down and see some salmon, fish and maybe the rafting people go beneath you, it is some sight to see. It is absolutely fantastic and it's something that we're very proud of out there. It's something we're very proud of out there.

The Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Centre: If you want to see some pictures, if you want to see some artifacts of things that came from Grand Falls-Windsor and our extraordinary history over the past century, you head on out to Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Centre and I tell you, there's some people out there that can give you a great tour and let you know, along with the Grand Falls House as well, that we're very proud of our town. We've had some hardworking people come from our town. It's gone through transitions over the past century.

A lot of people thought, you know, once the mill closed that was going to be it for Grand Falls-Windsor. You don't know people from Grand Falls-Windsor very well, I can tell you that, because they are resilient and they are strong and they will always find a way, like they did today. I'm so happy to have them there and so happy to represent that place out there.

Accommodations, restaurants, it's all out there as well. If you've never been to Buchans, Millertown, Buchan's Junction or Red Indian Lake, I tell you, what a spot. It is absolutely fantastic. They have Indian Point up there where the Beothuk have their teepees. They have a little settlement there. They excavated almost 20,000 artifacts from that place – 20,000 artifacts. It's phenomenal.

Unfortunately, it keeps washing away. Indian Point, slowly each year, is washing away. Millertown applied for some ditching up there – \$15,000 worth of ditching – no, sorry. It's not going to happen. I think the government spent more on consultations trying to rename the lake than they did to actually save Indian Point, and that's absolutely disgraceful. It's shameful. It's absolutely terrible.

I'm going to take the last two minutes here and just talk about a very close friend of mine who is in the fight of his life right now. We have a very special family in Grand Falls-Windsor, Shawn and Jackie Feener. They own The Classic Theatre in Grand Falls-Windsor. Shawn served on council for a bit; Chris is a musician; Mark has worked for the government – that's her two sons. They're just a phenomenal family and I'm so fortunate to have known them.

Shawn is in the hospital right now. He's literally in the fight of his life. I was down to visit him today and, like I said, just a phenomenal family. I just want to say to Jackie and Chris and Mark that you've got a full community behind you. You've got a full community behind you and I will do everything in my power to pray and hope that Shawn Feener comes home again. That's what we need as a community.

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

**C. TIBBS:** So I just want to thank Jackie for allowing me to come down to see Shawn today. I just wish him a very, very speedy recovery because, like I said, that's a family that's given so much to their community. I want them to know that their community is there for them and I just want to say I love you, Shawn, and get your butt home.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, that this House do now stand adjourned, and I'll remind folks that Estimates start at 5:30 here in the Chamber.

**SPEAKER:** 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.

This House do now stand adjourned until Monday, April 14 at 1:30 p.m., and tonight for Estimates, Transportation and Infrastructure and Public Procurement starting at 6 p.m. here in the Chamber.

Tomorrow at 9 a.m., Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation and the Resource Committee, and 1 p.m. the Social Services Committee with Education.

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