



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 110

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Monday

April 14, 2025

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit visitors.

Before we begin this afternoon, in the Speaker's gallery, I'd like to welcome Harold Miller who is recognized this afternoon for a Member's Statement. Harold is joined by his wife, Rowena, and his daughters, Carolann Ivany and Jennifer Hiscock.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also, in the public gallery, we welcome a good friend and former MHA, hon. Brian Warr.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also, in the public gallery, we would like to welcome team members of the Provincial Karate NL Team visiting us this afternoon for a Member's statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: They have also advised me, if I need further backup, they'll be willing to come down.

Welcome this afternoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we will hear statements by the hon. Members for Cape St. Francis, Waterford Valley, Baie Verte - Green Bay, Windsor Lake, Bonavista and St. John's Centre with leave.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize an outstanding individual who has been dedicated to the

service of others in my district, Mrs. Madonna Galway.

Madonna and her late husband Leo started the food bank in Torbay 28 years ago, only stepping down as president of the Northeast Avalon Food Bank in November of last year on her 78th birthday. Embracing kindness as a guiding principle, Madonna was endless with empathy, understanding and commitment to uplifting others through helping reduce hunger in families. Her name is synonymous with a community volunteer as she loved to answer the call from those in need, creating a lasting impact on the thousands of people that she has helped.

Campaigning, fundraising and lobbying for 28 years to keep the doors open and helping keeping food on the table through food hamper distribution was her mission. Organizing and facilitating the countless hamper distributions, ensuring the shelves were filled, accepting food and monetary donations while serving the communities of the Killick Coast was always done with kindness and respect.

Speaker, I ask my colleagues of this 50th General Assembly to join me in thanking Madonna Galway for her years of service, commitment and engagement to community. It is certainly appreciated by many.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you.

As we reflect on the season of Ramadan, Passover and Easter, I would like to take a moment to recognize the importance of this time for so many families in our province.

Easter is a time of renewal, hope and togetherness when families gather to celebrate traditions and create memories.

We are reminded of the strength that's found in all our small, medium and larger communities.

This spring, I've been inspired by many of the generousities shown by so many in our district, from food drives to Easter basket donations for the less fortunate, the spirit of giving is alive and well in the community. I'd like to thank local organizations, churches and volunteer groups and the residents who diligently ensure everyone can experience this joy.

I'd also like to encourage everyone to continue supporting the local businesses – from the florist to the chocolatiers or perhaps maybe an evening out at a restaurant – shopping local and shopping around strengthens our communities and reinforces the value of work.

As we move forward into spring, let us all carry the spirit of this season within ourselves: a good deed, a kind word and a gift of time with family and friends.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, Springdale Silver Gliders, 50th anniversary.

Last month, the Silver Gliders Figure Skating Club celebrated their golden anniversary. For half a century, the Silver Gliders have been a sharp-edged example in the Green Bay area, inspiring skaters of all ages, with their dedication and on-ice talent.

This notable milestone in their club's history is a testament to the commitment of every skater who has ever laced up their skates, every coach who has guided them and every volunteer who has dedicated time to make the club a success.

All those that have supported the Silver Gliders over the past five decades are to be

commended, as their efforts and often untiring time commitments have helped to not only shape generations of young skaters, but to create a love of sport and recreation. Most notably, it has fostered a lasting impact of community-mindedness in the Green Bay area.

During the Year of Sport in Newfoundland and Labrador, it is great to see participation with the Silver Gliders growing. I note that spectators were truly entertained by their artistic ice show, The Greatest Show on Ice, on the 29th of March in Springdale.

I invite all MHAs to salute with me the Silver Gliders Figure Skating Club for their golden milestone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to recognize the 10 junior and senior athletes of Karate NL, who recently competed in the 2025 Karate Canada National Championships in Richmond, British Columbia, from April 3 to April 6.

Team members include: Jane Fancy, Jack Fancy, Ian Fraser, Jack Tilley – all of whom live in the District of Windsor Lake – and Alexander Simms, Avery Noftall, John Ayers, Grace Noseworthy, Grayson Oldford and Emily Reglar. Along with coaches Nathaniel Besso and Colby Besso; team manager, Lee-Anne Fancy; and assistant team manager, Dale Fraser.

Through their hard work, discipline and dedication, two of the 10 athletes came home with bronze medals, Jane Fancy, who earned two bronze medals and Emily Reglar, who earned one. With these medals, both these athletes have secured their place on the Canadian National Team Roster for Team Canada.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating our provincial Karate NL team.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

On December 6, 1987, a crew member aboard the Newfoundland-based trawler, *Atlantic Elizabeth*, went overboard.

Harold Miller of Burgoyne's Cove was also a crew member. A life ring attached to a line was thrown to the man, who was wearing a floater vest, but he drifted out of sight in the darkness. The vessel came about, located him with searchlights and the crew threw him another life ring, which he was able to grasp.

Aware that the man was losing consciousness in the cold water, Harold dove in and swam to his aid. He reached the now-unconscious man and, holding his head above water in the heavy seas, brought him alongside the vessel. Harold received the Medal of Bravery for this in 1989.

Remarkably in 1981, Harold received the Cross of Valour, the highest civilian honour to recognize bravery in Canada, with the late Martin Sceviour, both were honoured for saving the lives of 12 crew members on a trawler trapped in strong seas, heavily iced over in imminent danger of capsizing. This occurred in November 1978, 13 kilometres from Nain, Labrador, while battling 1.5-metre waves in a six-metre motorboat.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating the courage and bravery of Harold Miller.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Does the Member have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Newbornlander is more than a children's clothing store; it's a social enterprise dedicated to sustainable, high-quality, locally made clothing for children that's rooted in Constanza Safatle's commitment to social justice, empowerment and community.

Constanza immigrated with her husband and young family in 2015. A commercial lawyer in Chile, but unable to practise law in her new home, Constanza redefined herself. From sewing clothing for her children, she started Newbornlander as a social enterprise in 2017, making baby accessories and providing meaningful employment for immigrant women.

Constanza understood the social isolation experienced by many newcomer women, especially if they lack the education and opportunities. Constanza believes people have a strong sense of belonging when they can give back to society.

Last year, with funding from the Northpine Foundation and the provincial government, she created the Sewing Hope Program to empower women, build confidence and independence. The program will provide over 120 women with the opportunity to learn computer and sewing skills, to socialize, improve their English, gain employment experience and, most importantly, continue their education.

Speaker, in a world where differences and intolerance threaten to divide us, Newbornlander offers welcome, connection and hope for women seeking to make Newfoundland and Labrador their home.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, this past weekend marked the beginning of a new era of mental health and addictions treatment in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Our province's new Mental Health and Addictions Centre opened, replacing the 170-year-old Waterford Hospital with a modern space that is patient-centred and more conducive to recovery and healing.

The new centre has 102 in-patient beds, with another 14 acute-care rooms at the Health Sciences Centre, for a total of 116 beds in the metro region.

We are excited that this new facility has been well received by individuals with experience of mental illness and addictions, family members, local advocates and the community.

Speaker, we remain focused on improving mental health and addictions services for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Budget 2025 included funding to support services throughout all regions of the province, such as expanding addiction treatment services, establishing stepped-down mental health facilities and wraparound community-based supports, additional naloxone kits, continued investment in the Harm Reduction Team and expanding the services of the opioid dependence treatment hubs.

Speaker, we're really excited about this new era for mental health and addictions treatment.

With this new facility, six beds in Labrador, 24 beds in Central Newfoundland and 20 beds in Western Newfoundland, we are ensuring people can receive mental health and substance use care closer to home and live a life of meaning and wellness.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Speaker, the opening of the new mental health and addictions facility is a welcome step. Without taking the other necessary steps forward, improving health care delivery in this province it's just a new building.

This year's recycled budget is filled with bricks and mortar but lacks in retention and human resource planning, missing the mark on initiatives which would ensure that mental health and addictions services operate smoothly.

Speaker, the people of this province both need and deserve action which will improve conditions, not just flashy new buildings. Unfortunately, government does not share the same belief as we do.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

We, too, welcome the new replacement for the Waterford Hospital. But as my colleague said, bricks and mortar alone won't improve

mental health services and we must increase our investment in people and programs too.

That's why we call on this government to follow the advice of the CMHA and double its spending on mental health to 12 per cent of the total health budget.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, over the last number of days there has been an increase in the gun-related crime throughout our communities, most recently in the Avalon Mall area, then in Spaniard's Bay area. Now as stand here in the House of Assembly today, there's actually a shelter in place at the Health Sciences Centre and faculty of medicine.

So I ask the minister responsible: How many actual police officers are actually in our province right now compared to last year, on the ground working?

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

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

There's no doubt there has been an increase in violent crimes around our province with respect to gun violence. That's why we've established and put in place some \$50 million to the Justice Department to increase resources at the RNC and the RCMP.

We've done that. We have 10 new officers for the Northeast Avalon. In this budget, 19

new officers that will be moved forward with the Policing Transformation Working Group, working very closely with communities, both the RNC and the RCMP. We've put in five new officers with the RCMP.

So there are more officers in place with the RNC and the RCMP. I can get the exact numbers for the Member opposite after the Question Period.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, the last ATIPP request that we submitted indicated there were over 100 police vacancies in this province. At the same time, the National Police Federation says the crime severity index has increased by 34 per cent in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. That's a staggering number.

So the important issue is, how many police officers are actually on the ground today compared to previous years, helping deal with this escalated crime in our communities?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said to the hon. Member just a second ago, I will get the exact numbers for him right after Question Period, but what I can say is that there has been a significant investment made. Some \$95 million per year goes to the RCMP, some \$75 million-plus to the RNC each and every year in this province and has been increasing over the past number of years.

We understand that the severity of crimes right across our country and around the globe are increasing. That's why we saw the need to put in place – my predecessor – the Policing Transformation Working Group that's doing some fantastic work within the communities, looking at how we police, what we need to do in each and every

community, looking at options that we can for the future of what policing will look like in each and every one of our communities across our province.

So I do understand how important it is and I do feel for any concerns that individuals have about public safety –

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Once upon a time, we used to watch crime on TV and we could go to see a doctor in our communities. Now, under this Liberal government, we have crime in our communities and we have to go to see a doctor on a TV screen.

Speaker, this past weekend, the former minister of Health issued a statement saying – quote – under my leadership, shingle vaccines will be free for everyone 50 years and older.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I ask the Minister of Finance: As a public supporter of this candidate, do you agree with this policy?

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

S. COADY: Do you know what's really interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the Conservatives say one thing and do another. They say they support seniors, yet they voted against the seniors' wellness program. They voted against the 15 per cent increase in that program. They say they support justice and public safety, yet they vote against the budget that provides additional officers and about \$40 million, I think, the minister just said.

I believe, Speaker, that we see a pattern here with these Conservatives of saying one thing, doing another thing and never supporting the people of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I'm sorry, either the minister didn't understand the question but I certainly didn't get the answer, so let me try again.

This candidate has the potential to be the minister's boss. He agrees with us, that all seniors should receive the shingles vaccine free of charge.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Do you support this policy and will you adjust your budget to reflect it?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I'm really pleased to have the support and endorsement of the Member opposite of retaining my position in Cabinet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Thank you for that.

I do work hard and I'm sure those results are being seen by the Members opposite as well. I will say we are going to do everything we possibly can to support seniors in this province. Just as we are doing in this budget supporting seniors, we're supporting families, we're supporting students and we're supporting the health care.

Speaker, we continue to put money into the budget and into the people's pockets of this province to address affordability, to improve

health care, to improve education. Yes, Speaker, as we go forward, we will certainly support continuing to invest in our seniors.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, she will have a new boss for a very short period of time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Let me ask that.

We still don't know whether she supports her new boss when he wants to give free vaccines for every senior in Newfoundland and Labrador. They certainly do.

Let me ask a question now of the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. We have been told that an RFP for an aircraft has closed with only one bidder, an American company. Does the minister intend to award the RFP to the American company?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, we are currently reviewing that and we will get back to the Members opposite and the public when we make a final decision.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I've been told that a local company has the ability to provide this service.

I ask the minister: Have you considered the local company providing this service instead of an American company providing a plane?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned we are reviewing that RFP and

we will get back to the Member opposite and the public when we've made a final decision.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: I'll ask the question again, Speaker.

I ask the minister: Will he consider, in this time of tariffs, using a local company that has said they can provide this service instead of purchasing an aircraft from the United States?

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

G. BYRNE: It's a pleasure to stand up and highlight the Atlantic Wildfire Centre and all the great work that we're doing supporting our resources and our communities, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

G. BYRNE: It is absolutely essential that our professionals who take on wildfire have the best possible equipment. We will maintain a very strict code within the RFP, within the specifications.

For example, one of the things that we will expect, which come from the professionals that guided our purchase decision, is that aircraft needs to be above the cockpit, not below it. It's difficult to see the ground when you're doing spotting when you cannot see the ground because there are wings that protrude below the cockpit. These may seem like very simple aspects, but they're very important.

We will provide opportunity for local companies, but we will always insist on the best.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, glad to hear but it sure sounds like he's telling us that the local company doesn't know what they're talking about. Surely, that can't be the case. Surely, we would've talked with local companies about what they can or can't do, given that we all want to see that happen.

Let me ask the Minister Responsible for the Public Procurement Agency another one. On March 31, techNL, the board of trade, econext, and the Manufacturers & Exporters Association wrote a letter asking for important changes to Newfoundland and Labrador's public procurement policies to promote local businesses and stimulate economic growth across sectors.

So I ask the minister: Will you bring legislation in this session of the House to include preferential consideration for local companies?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Public Procurement Agency.

G. BYRNE: To begin with the preamble, Mr. Speaker, the experts, the professionals that we do respond to are the very same people who guided us successfully through one of the worst wildfire seasons we've ever seen, not only this past year, but the years before that. They are the ones that put together the RFP.

This government is very, very open to maintaining a strong supplier relationship with Newfoundland and Labrador companies and providing with actual preference for Newfoundland companies, but one thing that we have to get clear is that we cannot endanger lives by not having the best equipment available to our wildfire professionals, our fighters.

So, with that said, we are engaged in many, many discussions with suppliers, including techNL. We have a refurbished supplier public procurement committee to look at that variation.

SPEAKER: The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm sure the local company will be interested in saving people's lives as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, on March 12, the Acting Minister of Health tried to defend the Liberal decision to leave many seniors without access to the shingles vaccine. He said – quote – this is a significant announcement for seniors. We have listened to seniors; we have listened to our caucus here.

Did he listen to the Member for Windsor Lake, the former minister of Health that just left days before that, when he advocated for coverage for all persons age 50 and older?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Yes, we did listen to a variety of people inside caucus and outside caucus. We have expanded our vaccine program this year for seniors; not just with shingles but we have also added RSV, a significant cause of hospitalization in seniors, and we've expanded our pneumococcal vaccine. These are significant advances and we will build on those year upon year, in the same way we did with our COVID vaccines and that was a very successful campaign.

So this is where we are now. Watch this space.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Member for Windsor Lake resigned as the Minister of Health on March 6. Five days later, the Liberals announced that only some seniors will be able to receive the shingles vaccine for free.

Clearly, that Member was in Cabinet when the decision was made. Now that the Member is calling for all seniors to receive the vaccine for free, I ask the Minister of Health: Who endorsed the Member for Windsor Lake? Will he correct the Liberal mistake and provide the vaccine to all seniors, now, 50 and older?

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

J. HAGGIE: I could do no better than to quote my colleague to my right: The journey of a million miles begins with a single step.

We are moving to provide vaccine coverage for shingles for seniors 65 to 70 and those who are older who are immunocompromised. When that uptake is under way, we will then evaluate the success of the program, as we do with all our vaccine programs, and build on that wherever possible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Minister of Finance knows that we support it; we called for it. We're only asking for them to implement that now. That's all we're asking for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: They like to play with words but I'm being factual.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: We want this implemented now. That's what we're asking government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, it has been nearly two weeks since the Auditor General released her scathing report on this government's failure to protect seniors in personal care homes.

A medication overdose death, a sexual assault and seniors wandering away and later found deceased, Speaker, these are extremely serious issues. What action has the minister taken since the release of this report to protect our seniors?

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

J. HAGGIE: I think I'll use this opportunity again, Speaker, to reiterate that there is no acceptable number of serious incidents with our seniors in long-term care or in personal care homes. We have met and continue to meet with the personal care home operators' associations. We have introduced several amendments and improvements to the standards over years and I have explained in other places why this has been a bit slower.

The one thing we have not done is been very good at publishing these on our website. The personal care home operators have them; NLHS, who were charged with oversight, have them; and they are available for those in the industry. We have also increased, by 17 FTEs, the number of people involved in supervision and oversight.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I repeat, these are serious issues. I think it should affect every single person in this

province and we need action on those issues. No one is talking about the real serious issues and these are the ones I just highlighted and we're going to continue to highlight. This stuff needs action; seniors need to be protected.

Speaker, Dr. Parfrey believes case management should fall under NL Health Services while licensing and monitoring should be handled by another entity. If Dr. Parfrey doesn't see this as his role and the minister is suggesting this is merely a communications failure, then who is actually responsible for oversight today?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

NLHS is responsible for the oversight of personal care home operations and standards. That is clearly out there, I have said that and it is not a subject for debate or discussion. I am happy to reiterate that for the Member opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Maybe a couple of people need a reminder because I think the AG said that the blame squarely falls at the feet of the Department of Health and Community Services. Dr. Parfrey is only distancing himself from one issue; he's not accepting the other one, so maybe they should sit down and speak.

Speaker, the Auditor General stated that the department distanced itself from oversight of the program and routinely failed to act on noncompliance, thereby failing to act on its responsibility. Is the Auditor General wrong or is the minister simply covering for the failures of his predecessor?

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

J. HAGGIE: The Auditor General looked at documentation for these incidents. She is correct in that that documentation was missing or incomplete. We have resolved internally to deal with that and I gave that undertaking the day the report came out.

The facts of the case are that each of those incidents was responded to promptly and appropriately. We have said that we need to do better on our documentation. There is an action plan in preparation and it will be out within the next few weeks. I'll be happy to share it with anybody who's interested.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

Last week in budget Estimates, we heard there are five Jordan's hearings scheduled in criminal court and the minister could not tell us how many additional applications are filed. This means many criminal cases are in danger of being thrown out of court due to lengthy delays.

Justice delayed is justice denied. Is the minister concerned that persons charged with serious crimes are walking free?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That is not what I think was said. I think it was very clear in Estimates that there were five Jordan's applications. We can't presume that there are more than there are applications filed. We can only go by the applications filed.

Let me be very clear here today, one person that finds a way around something because of an application, that's a problem for me. We want to make sure that doesn't happen. We want to make sure that justice is received timely and as fast as we can. That's why we've made significant

investments in Crown attorneys this budget year and for the next three years to come; because we want to make sure that those applications become fewer and fewer to the point at which we don't have any.

We can't control some of the things that are actions. The things we can control, we're going to do everything in our power to make sure it doesn't happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So, Speaker, the minister didn't address the issue of whether he's concerned that potential cases will be thrown out of court and that's clearly a very serious possibility here.

It's not just in the criminal courts. We have examples of lengthy delays in the civil system as well. The example of the controverted election case that has been played out in the courts from a botched election that happened four years ago is still not resolved. These are serious allegations of abuses of people's right to vote.

Is the minister concerned that on the eve of another provincial election, the court case to test the legitimacy of the last election continues still to be unresolved?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the hon. Member knows full well, I can't speak about cases before the court, both civilly and criminally, in any manner. If the hon. Member wants to interfere in the independent process of the judiciary, she can move to the United States and occupy the White House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I would hope that the Minister of Justice realizes that he's responsible for the administration of justice which involves court delays –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – yet, he maintains he is not responsible here. Sad.

Speaker, we have heard that two doctors have resigned and two have given public notice of their resignation from Carbonear General Hospital. When will this government take real action to stabilize the internal medicine program and ensure patients aren't left waiting 17 hours or more in the ER due to a shortage of doctors?

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

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

I think it's important to address the preamble. The hon. Member is well aware that we do not interfere in the independent judiciary. They set the parameters on which we govern ourselves from a justice perspective. There are three independent branches within the society in which we live in. We cannot dictate to the judiciary what they're going to do or how fast they're going to be able to move. We give them the resources; it's in their purview to do that.

That's exactly what we're going to continue to focus on. We will make sure that we provide as much resource as we possibly can given the financial constraints that we are within, as any government would be in. We are going to continue to make those investments in the law and that whole justice continuum that we all face for the people that we all represent in this House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'll ask the question to the Minister of Health again.

We have heard that two doctors have resigned and two doctors have given public notice of their resignations from Carbonear General Hospital. When will this government take real action to stabilize the internal medicine program and ensure patients aren't left waiting 17 hours or more in the ER due to a shortage of doctors?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, 140 – that's the number of doctors we have recruited in the last 12 to 18 months.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: The Member opposite raises an important point. Internal medicine in this province, indeed in Canada, is a discipline in need of support. We have moved to do that. We have got our internal medicine residency program here back on track. It wasn't and that's been addressed.

In terms of go forward, we're looking at who is available from internal medicine at the end of May. That's when CaRMS, the Canadian Resident Matching Service, graduates come off the end of their program. We will continue to recruit specifically for internal medicine.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, the minister is talking about recruitment. My question is talking about retention.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Why are doctors continuing to leave Carbonear General Hospital?

Doctors are leaving; ER wait times are going up. They need to have a plan to stabilize the internal medicine program. This affects many people and many patients and many of my constituents in the District of Harbour Main so I want to know why are doctors continuing to leave and why can't you keep them there?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Recruitment and retention do go hand in hand, the Member opposite is correct. We have the most generous package in Canada for family doctors and physicians in general for recruitment and retention. We concentrate on both.

In terms of why a physician might choose to leave a community, we have looked at it and are continuing to do exit interviews where possible so we can learn from the challenges that these individuals face. The facts of the case are that, historically, a significant number of physicians in this province have always left and physician mobility across Canada is important. We have benefited from those who come from other places.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, I ask the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development: Which seniors' shingle vaccine policy do you endorse, the one your government has implemented or the one the Member for Windsor Lake has announced during his leadership run?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much for the question – an important question.

Seniors are every important to this government, I can tell you right now. That's why we've introduced the Seniors' Well-Being Plan. That's why we increased, by 15 per cent, the Seniors' Benefit. That's why, now, we're indexing the Seniors' Benefit. That's why we're introducing, in a step-by-step fashion, the introduction of shingles vaccine, RSV vaccine and pneumococcal vaccine.

Speaker, this is incredibly important. I implore the Member opposite to support this budget so we can fund these initiatives.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: I'll try it again.

I remind the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, when we suggested it in our PMR, they didn't vote for it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I ask the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, again, which of the seniors' shingles vaccine policies does he endorse, the one from the government that was implemented or the one the Member for Windsor Lake has announced during his leadership run?

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

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to say that, just this past weekend, I met with seniors and one of the things that we discussed was the shingles vaccine. I'm very pleased with it. I must say, a lot of good dialogue regarding the shingles vaccine, but they did ask that we would look at, you know, expanding the program.

The answer to the hon. Member's question is, I support both of these programs that were mentioned.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, despite the fact that \$3 million has been allocated in the budget to relocate women's gynecological services from the Health Sciences Centre to the Janeway Children's Hospital, the Acting Minister of Health said last week that there are no plans, concrete or otherwise.

Obviously, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services communicated something different to pediatricians since they found it necessary to write a 30-page response in which they state that the proposal was made without any prior consultation with pediatric clinical leadership, families or the community.

I ask the minister: Why was there no prior consultation?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Just for clarity at the beginning of my comments, there is not now nor in the future any intent on behalf of this government to diminish children services at the Janeway. Let's get that out of the way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: The next piece is, when one starts a process of consultation, there is also a stage at that where there has been no prior consultation. I would suggest to the Member opposite, we may be at the beginning of consultation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Obviously the doctors have been told it's a done deal.

Speaker, I believe the minister fails to appreciate just how angry pediatric health professionals are for them to submit such a response. Entitled *Preserve, Protect, Prioritize: Ensuring Specialized Pediatric Care at the Janeway*, the response urges Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services to immediately pause any implementation of the proposed integration of adult in-patient services within the Janeway.

I ask the minister: Will he halt the integration until thorough consultation takes place with families, the community and the health care professionals at the Janeway?

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

J. HAGGIE: No child in this province will be disadvantaged by any change on the Health Sciences or Janeway site.

I would congratulate Dr. Parfrey on having the diligence and the nerve to deal with the fact that, at one end of a corridor, 40 per cent of the beds are empty and, at the other end, 110 per cent of them are occupied. That needs to be resolved and this is the start of doing something about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, signing on to the federal pharmacare program would bring millions of dollars into our province to help cover the cost of diabetic medications and devices for the one-in-three people in our province who are living with diabetes or prediabetes. Meanwhile, the government continues to sit

on the sidelines, leaving much needed federal money on the table.

I ask the minister: Why has this government refused to sign on to the national pharmacare program?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

There is effectively a caretaker government in Ottawa and, therefore, in fact, there is no organization, body or individual with whom we can sign a deal.

We are ready. We are happy to have federal dollars in health care whether it's for pharmacare or indeed for anything else and, certainly, I think there is a significant benefit to the people of this province from signing on when this program gets rebooted with the new government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I ask the minister: Is this government going to publicly commit to signing on to the federal pharmacare program with the federal government and begin negotiations for that process?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

We were almost at the stage of doing so and then two things happened: one, the money ran out at the federal level and then, the next thing was, there was an election. As soon as that's all sorted out, we'll be back at the table and finish the negotiations we've already started.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, the report points out that assumptions of unused space, a fallacy perpetrated by the minister a minute ago, and the data used by the consultant engaged by the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, are flawed. A 25 per cent increase to children's rehabilitation clinic, over 80,000 outpatient appointments in 2024, regular diversions faced by the pediatric intensive care unit and disruptions to procedures combined with NL having the highest rate of medically complex in children indicate that the space at the Janeway is not sitting idle.

I ask the minister: Will government invest in the Janeway to expand the pediatric services and to add on space to the Health Sciences to house adult gynecological services?

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

J. HAGGIE: I'm not sure what the Member opposite is referring to in terms of data. The data I am referring to is bed occupancy from the patient registration system at the Janeway and Health Sciences Centre; and for the Member opposite's benefit, the ICU at the Janeway reached peak capacity during COVID. It has not done so since.

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: I do have one.

In accordance with section 19(5)(a) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I hereby table the minutes of the House of Assembly

Management Commission meetings held on July 17, October 22, November 25, December 4 and December 20, 2024, and February 3, 2025.

Are there any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS there has not been any significant improvements in Wi-Fi and cell service throughout the District of Placentia West - Bellevue for 10 years.

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to formulate a plan to improve Wi-Fi and cell service issues throughout the District of Placentia West - Bellevue affecting fire and emergency services, tourism, business, medical services and personal use that does not meet today's standards and expectations.

I've presented this petition several times and I present it on behalf of the people of Placentia West - Bellevue, which it affects deeply but I know it also affects everybody else in rural Newfoundland because when we look at telehealth and we look at business and industry, when it comes to fire and emergency services and when it comes to tourism, we're so far behind the rest of the world that it's significantly impacting those services.

When we look at personal use, we're really 30 years behind the rest of the world when it comes to our households being developed. I

mean, to know that we can't have any significant connection, I guess, to the World Wide Web and everything like that, these are significant repercussions to people's lives.

I think, to be quite honest, we should move Wi-Fi and cell service into being an essential service because in today's day in age, we can't live without it, but not having it is making us so deficient as a society it's just unbelievable.

So I call upon the government of the day to make significant improvements and significant investments and speak to the companies that provide these services to make sure that Newfoundland and Labrador is finally getting the services to be brought up to 2025.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

A. PARSONS: Yes, thank you, and I thank the Member for the petition.

I certainly agree that there is still work that has to be done as we move forward into trying to ensure full coverage under any gamut, whether it's cell phone or whether it's broadband. I mean, I would say that we have had made significant strides when we talk about the province-wide police radio system, which was a massive investment. That's rolling out and that deals with a lot of the first responders we deal with and that connectivity that's between them, whether it's even school bus drivers, paramedics, you name it.

The second thing is, we've had some success using the Wi-Fi repeater system and I'm happy to have these conversations with anyone about what it entails. I mean, it's not for everywhere. It's very low cost but, at the same time, it does involve sort of a specific area. It's not meant to happen in a city, really, or things like that but we do have

longer desolate highways where it does cut them in half and allow for connectivity.

We have made some announcements recently. I am very happy to see that we made an announcement last week for Trinity and for Hearts Delight-Islington and for Holyrood. Again, though, that's just three areas and still takes some work but there's work left to do.

So what I would say to the Members, happy to have the conversation and look at specific solutions to specific ideas at the same time looking at the broad look at the system as well.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

The Exploits District has seen increased speeding and ATV activity in the area causing safety issues for residents in their communities.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to encourage the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase enforcement in the district to provide adequate safety and protection to our residents.

Speaker, I have presented this petition before. We've noticed increased crime in the Central area, especially in the Exploits District and in Central. The public is concerned about their safety. In 2019, there was a review done and that review showed that we should have received two more officers in the Central area. This was ignored by the Liberal government and, by doing so, they refused to increase police activity and public safety.

Speaker, according to the National Police Federation, the crime severity index has increased in rural Newfoundland by 34 per cent. If that 2019 review didn't indicate that we need two extra officers in Central Newfoundland to compensate for the 34 per

cent increase in rural Newfoundland where crime is increasing – we hear it on the news every day. Every evening you turn on the news, there's crime increasing, especially in the rural areas. Exploits District is no different and, in the 2019 review, we should have had those extra officers.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We remain committed to working with communities and the RCMP. It's a contract police force that we have. We want to make sure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians feel safe and secure. We meet very regularly with the assistant commissioner of the RCMP, Mr. Pat Cahill. We're always looking at improvements that we can make there.

I know they went through a little bout of challenges with recruitment. That's passed. They're recruiting successfully now. They've reduced some barriers with respect to recruiting candidates. I know there are more full complements of classes and cadets at the depot that will be making their way to Newfoundland and Labrador. I know that the vacancy factor that they've had will be reduced drastically when those recruits fill in here.

We, as a government, put in place the Policing Transformation Working Group that works with the RCMP very closely, as well as the RNC and all communities to look at options on what we need to be doing to ensure our communities are safe. As I've mentioned in a previous answer, that we invest some \$95 million in policing resources for the RCMP and we understand fully the great work that they do in our communities.

It's not lost on me when I hear petitions from the hon. Member or from anyone on that

side about wanting to make their community safe; we want that on this side as well. So we're committed to trying to expand where we can, and I know they can operationally move policing resources around the province as they need to as well.

SPEAKER: The minister's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Anti-temporary replacement worker legislation – these are the reasons for this petition:

Anti-temporary replacement worker laws have existed in Quebec since 1978, in British Columbia since 1993 and the federal government has introduced such legislation at the end of 2023.

The use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or a lockout is damaging to the social fabric of the community, the local economy and the well-being of residents.

Anti-temporary replacement worker legislation has been shown to reduce the lengthiness and divisiveness of labour disputes.

Since 2015, the right to strike has been clearly protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* because it helps stabilize the power imbalance between workers and employers.

And the use of temporary replacement workers undermines that right.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.

Once again, I bring this forward on behalf of the residents of Labrador West who have continued to pass this petition into me, who continue to advocate that such legislation be brought in. We've had some strikes over the years. You look at the Voisey's Bay

strike where the industrial inquiry into that has shown that this was a problem and then you also look at the D-J Composites strike in Gander which also showed this was a problem.

Once again, we're bringing the forward to the government to look into enacting anti-temporary replacement worker legislation and to parallel what the federal government has already done to protect the rights of workers and to make sure to keep that balance between worker and employer balanced.

We've shown that it is necessary. We've seen that sometimes employers do shift the balance by using temporary replacement workers during strikes and lockouts, so they continue on forward while people whose jobs are being replaced. We are asking the government to do the right thing: enact this legislation and make sure the actual balance between worker and employer is truly balanced.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The section of road between Bay Bulls and the St. John's city limits is in need of major repairs and forms a piece of the Irish Loop road highway system. This is the main thoroughfare for many residents who commute to work every day to St. John's or Mount Pearl from the Southern Shore.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade this piece of infrastructure to enhance and improve the flow of traffic.

Speaker, I've done this petition on a few occasions as well and, just only over the weekend, I was out at an event and I spoke to one of the drivers that clears the highways and it's really dangerous. When they're plowing the highways with the flyers

that they use, the plow, obviously, is going along the middle of the road and the road is really rutted. It's dangerous.

They take the snow off the road but when it's down into the grooves, it's not getting cleared as well as if it was new pavement, obviously. It's very dangerous. I'll give you an example: When I turn off the road to where I live and come onto the main Route 10, my ABS cuts in on my vehicle when I make the turn. It goes down into a rut and the ABS will cut in on the vehicle on occasion. That's how deep it is and how dangerous it is.

We have many people in the area who are using – you know, tourism season will be starting pretty soon again and, obviously, people coming to the area for the East Coast Trail, boat tours, lighthouse picnics, the archeological site up in Portugal Cove South, the ATV trails which are big in our area as well, whale watching and restaurants. Everybody is coming to the area's tourism and this stretch of road is a main thoroughfare. It's something that should be looked at, certainly from the top end of Bay Bulls toward the city limits in St. John's.

That's used by so many residents, nurses, doctors, everybody going to work in St. John's or Mount Pearl area. It's something that, like I said, I've done many petitions on over the last few years and hopefully something that the minister can look at. The road is getting worse as the traffic goes along. There's a lot of heavy equipment on the roads. I get some complaints from motorcyclists in the area as well; it's hard. So when you're driving along, do you try to ride along in the middle of that section of road or you get down into the groove of the road or they go on the inside of the pavement or you go onto the outside towards the yellow line? So it's very dangerous.

Again, with people towing trailers and campers – and just regular trailers. I had a crab fisherman the other day that said the same thing, trying to tow his trailer and if they lose a little bit of movement or make a

little bit of movement with their trailer, out it goes and it throws the trailer way off. It goes out over the yellow line or, you know, it sort of throws them off.

So it's something, hopefully, the minister can look at and, certainly, you know, have a look at in the budget again and keep it on the list.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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 8.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, April 16, but instead shall meet at 2 p.m. on that date for Routine Proceedings and the conduct of Government Business.

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.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 9.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that notwithstanding Standing Order 8(3)(b), at the conclusion of proceedings on Wednesday, April 16, that this House do adjourn to Monday, May 12, 2025.

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.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act No. 3, Bill 111, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 111, the Fishery Industry Collective Bargaining Act No. 3, and that said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act No. 3," carried. (Bill 111)

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Amend the Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act No. 3. (Bill 111)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 111 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 5.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 9, Bill 112, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, the Revenue Administration Act No. 9, Bill 112, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 9," carried. (Bill 112)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 9. (Bill 112)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 112 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Renewable Energy Resources in the Province, Bill 113, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act Respecting Renewable Energy Resources in the Province, Bill 113, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, that the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Renewable Energy Resources in the Province," carried. (Bill 113)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Renewable Energy Resources in the Province. (Bill 113)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 113 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 7. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Acting Minister of Health and Community Services, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Human Organ and Tissue Donation, Bill 114, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act Respecting Human Organ and Tissue Donation, Bill 114, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, that the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Human Organ and Tissue Donation," carried. (Bill 114)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Human Organ and Tissue Donation. (Bill 114)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 114 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, the budget debate.

SPEAKER: We're now debating the main budget debate.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always an honour to rise in this hon. House and speak on behalf of the people of Placentia West - Bellevue who are obviously affected by any budget that comes through the House of Assembly.

The first thing I want to touch on, Speaker, is the fact that, in our budget that's just been presented here recently in the House of Assembly, it really doesn't go far enough for the things that people had requested or asked for. It wasn't just over the last cycle of budget talks or anything like that. It's been going on for five years of budget cycle talks and, in this budget, I was very disappointed that while we have advocated on this side to implement a disability advocate, the other side doesn't see it as a priority I guess, because it's not mentioned again in the budget this year.

The Minister of CSSD has a mandate letter to implement a disability advocate and I

think we, as the Official Opposition, were very instrumental in replacing the Child and Youth Advocate, which is a great office that helps our youth and our children throughout the province whether they're in care or to make sure that their rights are not violated. The office is working really well and I commend the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

We also very much promoted the fact that we needed a Seniors' Advocate. We were very instrumental, I think, as an Official Opposition, in helping get that implemented as well. While this is a policy office, we kind of wished it was a little bit more toward the Child and Youth Advocate office of being able to represent the individuals that would be calling and that have extraordinary circumstances when it comes to what they would be looking for from their Seniors' Advocate.

The reason why we've pushed so hard and for so long about a disability advocate is that we want to clear up and get rid of the redundancy of information. We want to make sure that the information that people are going to look for, it's going to be specific to their unique case and their unique situation. So I think a disability advocate would clear up a lot of bureaucracy and it would also clear up the mindset that's out there, I guess, that they're kind of left out in the ocean bobbing and waving, hoping that they're going to get rescued soon enough.

It's something that we really can't ignore any longer. We've been asking for it for five years. I am very disappointed again to say that it wasn't in this year's budget. That's not just from me. That's from the disability community as well. They felt that they were kind of left out of the budget in moving forward to a situation that would be comparable to these people getting the services and care that they need.

The big thing about it too, and not to belabour the point, but I hope it doesn't fall short on anybody that it's actually 30 per cent of our population here in Newfoundland and Labrador that are part of the disability community, that have either a physical or a

mental ailment that gives them, I guess, the designation of having a disability. As the parent of child with autism, I feel that this has gone and the can has been kicked down the road too far.

It's about awareness, it's about getting out in the schools and if we had a disability advocate, then that would be the person who would be able to promote this from that one singular office as opposed to having to bring in so many different offices from Health and Community Services to Municipal Affairs to CSSD to Treasury Board and Finance.

There are so many different areas now that people with disabilities have to go to in order to get the help that they need that it's almost becoming a redundancy of information sharing. So we want to try and take away some of that redundancy and make sure that the people who are presenting with a disability are getting the care that they need and, as our Health Accord said, in a place that they need it, in a timely fashion that they need it.

When we look at the disability community, we know that 95 per cent of the disability community have a compromised immune system; therefore, there are special needs that when they're presenting at a hospital, sitting in a waiting room for 15 and 16 hours is not conducive to their health. Because with an immunocompromised situation, they might be susceptible to picking up something that's actually airborne in the emergency room and, therefore, picking up something that they didn't go in looking for but they went in to try and get help with their disability.

I think that it's high time that the government look at the fact that we establish a disability advocate and make sure that that office is supported on behalf of the people of the disability community which makes up 30 per cent of our population. On behalf of the people of my district and the province and as a parent of a child with a disability, I would ask that this be implemented so it covers a large portion of our population that

present with different abilities or disabilities, depending on the unique case.

The next thing I want to have a look at with our budget which affects everybody in the province, but it affects our seniors a little bit more, and that's the Provincial Home Repair Program. When we look at the Provincial Home Repair Program, a lot of times our seniors have been either bequeathed their house or they've been in it a long time and they probably didn't purport benefits into their retirement, depending on what job they had throughout their lifetime and stuff like that.

The Provincial Home Repair Program gives them an opportunity to make significant repairs to their house so that they're not living in a compromised situation, like a leaky roof or needing of an oil tank or anything like that. I think the problem with the program is that it hasn't been expanding in a long time and therefore the thresholds are really not conducive to the situation today that people would find themselves in financially.

I think the thing is that if we move the threshold to a higher limit, it would give more people the opportunity to be able to avail of the program and get the repairs done to their homes prior to going into winter or anything like that. Then, based on the amount of times that they use the program or what they had to use the program for, there should be probably a couple of different sections where one is about home repairs and then the other section would be about emergency home repairs that can't go ignored, like a leaky roof or mold or anything like that that they find themselves in, through no cause of their own, but to the fact that this is the living conditions that they find themselves in because they can't do repairs to their home, which is very unfortunate because that's what the program is meant to do and we're kind of coming up a little bit short on that because we're not moving the thresholds.

The amount of people that are over the threshold now with these little increments, I guess, that are improving their amount of

money coming in, while that might increase, taking on that small stipend might put you over the threshold, and therefore you're not eligible for certain programming or dental plan or anything like that.

To me, it's that we need to look at the Provincial Home Repair Program and make sure that it's expanded, and maybe there's a significant difference that we could look at for anybody that's 50-plus or 55-plus, I don't know. But the thing is that as people gear towards their retirement, we would like to be able to give them that opportunity to make sure that their home is in good repair and fixed up before they go into retirement.

As we know, on a fixed income, it's very difficult to find the wherewithal to make sure that we can afford these different repairs that we might need, that are essential. This is not a beautification program or anything like that. People are not going out and changing out their furniture or anything because they want a new style in their home. They are going out and are utilizing this program because, otherwise, they are not able to get a loan from the bank, or if they do get a loan from the bank, it's significantly more interest on it to do the repairs and to repay the loan.

With the Home Repair Program, we give them that opportunity to live comfortably, and that's part of our mandate through the Residential Tenancies Act is that you get to peacefully enjoy your home and the place where you live.

So I think the Home Repair Program, provincially, needs to be updated. I think the thresholds need to be moved out. I don't think a threshold of \$50,000 is actually too much to expect. Where we're in such a difficult economy, the dollars are not going quite as far as they used to. Therefore, I would suggest that if we move the threshold up from what it is today, we would actually be able to help more seniors and more people in our province that find themselves needing home repairs, but really can't find the program or can't find the significant amount of money that it takes to make those repairs.

I do call on government to expand the Home Repair Program and have a significant look at it. Like I said, there are elements in the budget that are beneficial, but the thing is that there are some things that come up a little bit too short that we would like to see improved before we can agree to approve in any budget or anything like that. Because, like I said, there may be some elements that are beneficial, there are other elements that leave people. The Home Repair Program and the disability advocate are two examples of those.

Here in the House today, I presented a petition about Wi-Fi and cell service which, again, it's an announcement. I don't see any real meat on the bone, we'll say, kind of thing for somebody to chew on. The thing is that if we're saying that we're putting significant money into it, I want to make sure, I guess – and the minister actually answered and responded to my petition and I am going to take him up on the call to sit with him and have a little think tank and see what can be done for, specifically, for Placentia West - Bellevue but also for the province.

Wi-Fi and cell service, as I said in my petition today, I think we need to move them into an essential service. Especially if we're talking about utilizing Wi-Fi and cell service to provide services in health care. There are lot of people in my district that don't have a doctor and we're asking them to do telehealth or to see a doctor online or anything like that. Therein lies the bad suggestion, for the simple fact that they don't have access to Wi-Fi and cell service and there are many dead areas, not only the Burin Peninsula, but in significant areas on the isthmus portion of my district as well.

The district goes from basically Long Harbour, Chapel Arm intersection or the interchange right to Marystown. Like I said, there are significant amounts of dead spaces. Most people had great access to Wi-Fi and cell service back in 1995 and we're here now in 2025, thirty years later, and I've still got a lady down in Brookside that's got to stand up in the front window of her house just to download a picture of her

grandkid. Today, I think that's beyond reprehensible because that's not acceptable. Anywhere else in Canada it's not acceptable but, apparently, it's acceptable here which I don't think is acceptable.

With that being said, we had a talk today about supporting our fire and emergency services. If we had improved Wi-Fi and cell service, then that significantly would improve the call times, the wait times, the arrival times, the rescue times. It would improve drastically everything in fire and emergency services and the communication amongst fire departments.

I understand about the new system that got implemented for fire and emergency services. That was money that wasn't necessarily budgeted for because it came from NL911 and we took that money and we put it into the system of improving connectivity, I guess, or communications amongst our fire and emergency services, our paramedics and everybody.

Like I said, that's a good implementation. We'd be able to do it. Everybody has a technology in their pocket. We'd be able to do it if we put up the cell towers and we had a significant amount of service available. With it not being available now, we had to go to a different system, which it's working but there were a few snags in the system, obviously, about essential calls and stuff like that going out to our fire departments as opposed to it landing on the right person.

A lot of times when it comes to Wi-Fi and cell service, two of the towers, I think, that are significantly impacted are health and community services and also fire and emergency services, which are essential to everybody in the province. This is not, you know, a one-off or we're trying to do something for this area or that area, or I'm asking for something special to Placentia West - Bellevue that nobody else has in the province. That's not what we're asking for. I have a very industrial district and when we have all that industry, it's also business and industry that are significantly impacted by that as well.

For instance, I have the smelter in Long Harbour for Vale, and they have a significant underground operation now that they're moving to underground in Labrador, and they came up with their own system in order to be able to connect from the implementation in Long Harbour and the implementation in Voisey's Bay.

The thing is that industry sees how important it is. So if business and industry can operate a little more smoother, kind of thing, and have that communication right at their fingertips as opposed to wondering if they're going to be able to get through to their colleagues and also, since COVID, we know that Teams meetings or Zoom meetings or anything like that, we can do all these virtual meetings now which kind of cuts down on the amount of travel that has to happen between offices in order to connect.

So the thing is that Wi-Fi and cell service would be so vastly important to our businesses and industry that I wouldn't want to think that the low productivity that we have on our Wi-Fi and cell service is the reason why we don't have significant investment or have other investments in our province today. That would be very unfortunate that we wouldn't be able to utilize our natural resources or anything like that or significantly bring people in for investment because if they see it as the inability, I guess, to communicate, then it might detract them from wanting to do business here and it might attract them to do business somewhere else.

What I'm saying is that I want us to be on a level playing field so that we can promote our province and our people and the services that we have to offer here to the rest of the world and let them know that we are open for business, because that's where we are going.

In the last couple of minutes that I have, I would like to touch on tourism for the simple fact that that's the shadow Cabinet role that I have on behalf of the Official Opposition. We just had Estimates on Friday morning that went quite well, but it's due to the

communication, I think, that we have between the Official Opposition and government in making sure that our voice is being heard and it's not being ignored, and I commend the minister and his staff for that. Because when they present to us in Estimates, we have to rely on that information, therefore it's very important that the information be accurate and that we can actually rely on the information.

I also want to thank my researcher, Mr. Glenn Littlejohn, for coming in with me and keeping me on my toes but also picking up on anything that came out of Estimates that would garner a new question or something that we would want to mitigate against while we were in the Estimates process. I want to thank Glenn for that, for sure.

Like I said, when it comes to tourism, with Wi-Fi and cell service, I'll just touch on the fact that we have one of the most beautiful trails in Chance Cove. If we had somebody come from Portugal that wanted to see that trail and they thought it was so beautiful and you get out around the back of the trail out by Patrick's Cove and it's almost like you're in Costa Rica. It's unbelievable, it's so beautiful, but we have issues with Wi-Fi and cell service there where if I was from Portugal, I can't really get on Facetime and show everybody exactly what I'm experiencing.

The other thing is that one of the priorities that I made this year was about fixing the road up to get to that trail and I didn't really see much on the roads plan for that but I'll get some more time to be able to touch on the roads and stuff like that.

I thank you for your time today, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: Speaker, according to the government, their budget is: *Smarter. Stronger. Better. Budget 2025* has also been described as a stay-the-course

budget, but I would ask, who pays for staying the course? I would suggest those already at the margins and I would also state that it's not always wise to stay the course.

I'm sure we've all heard the story of the battleship and the lighthouse. A battleship was on exercise out at sea in bad weather. The visibility was terrible and, just after dark, the lookout spotted the light on the starboard side. The captain ordered the lookout to signal to the other ship: change your course 20 degrees; we are on a collision course. The signal came back: advisable for you to change course. The captain signaled: I'm a captain, change course 20 degrees. I'm a seaman 2nd class, you had better change course 20 degrees, came the reply. The captain was furious, he sent back: I'm a battleship, change course and back came the signal: I'm a lighthouse; your call.

A couple of things stand out from this story. It's important to check your assumptions when staying the course, especially in challenging times, and to be prepared to alter direction when necessary; and, when choosing to change, it's important to ask who pays the price and what are the opportunities.

The Budget Speech states, "To increase exploration and encourage discovery, beginning in 2026, we will invest \$90 million over three years to advance an offshore exploration fund." Not the first that highly profitable oil companies received generous government handouts. During the pandemic, oil companies received over \$600 million from federal and provincial government in the form of direct cash transfers and royalty cuts. In 2022, oil companies posted record profits.

Now imagine what \$90 million could do to advance the exploration of critical minerals in this province; or, the provincial Liberals could have invested this public money to enhance the well-being of the citizens of the province, remove the provincial portion of the HST from all forms of home heating or from children's products for that matter.

I believe we do better when those around us are doing well. Before I was an MHA, I volunteered with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and got to see the terrible conditions, the bed-sitting rooms, that many people live in. Especially – and this is most heart-wrenching – seniors who were supposed to be enjoying the so-called golden years.

Staying the course regarding housing, what does that look like? The provincial Liberals have made numerous announcements, mainly in response to pressure from the New Democratic Party, the Opposition, the housing advocates and the media. In February, the former minister of Housing announced a 13 micro-unit housing development – a very small start. Welcome, but more needs to be done.

The other question I would have to ask, and many housing advocates ask, is what exactly does affordable mean, especially when private sector has to make a profit? I can give you plenty of examples of REITs, these real estate income trusts, and other large landlords where the rents are going up in a year, each year, \$40 to \$160 a month. Those on fixed incomes can't afford it. Government offers rent subsidies but what is the use if landlords simply increase their rents to capitalize on that extra money?

It was something I clearly heard at the town hall we had with regard to the impact of increasing rent. A gentleman, for example, who was working two jobs as a home care worker to stay in the building he's in. People are paying a mortgage in rent but, ironically, will never qualify for a mortgage and I'll tell you this, personally, I am tired of not being able to help people – people who are facing eviction because their house is being sold or facing homelessness because rents are going up and there's nowhere for them to go.

Now, there are many non-monetary solutions if government had the political will to do so: rent and vacancy controls, the end of no-fault eviction notices, such things that would stabilize housing. The concern is that it would discourage investment but, I will

say, it will discourage the organizations like REITs from buying up properties without adding to capacity and then jacking up rents, and it will keep people from being evicted.

We need more supportive housing. We need more non-market, community-based housing for deeply affordable housing where the focus is on people and not profit. The added benefit, I would argue, is that the more we do that, we drive down rents for all. Government could enter into partnership with the Co-operative Housing Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and others, set up land-lease communities, land trust, rent banks, organize tenant unions for that matter, all of which would help the overall housing crisis.

Now, despite the housing needs, \$23 million was cut from the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation budget when we should be finding ways to increase it. Livingstone Street is emblematic of the problems and where money needs to be invested. Since 2019, I've seen houses in disrepair and getting worse, boarded up windows, vacant units, foam spray to cover up the holes – plenty of examples and these are people's homes.

We've seen violence and crime there. We've been – I and others have been advocating for a community centre. I've toured the neighbourhood with a former minister of CSSD, Minister Pike, and asked the question how to keep the difficult-to-house people from being evicted and to ensure the safety of the neighbours. Advocated for a budget to repair houses.

In October 2023, fire destroys 106-108 Livingstone Street. The Minister of Housing initiates a study with Thrive to finally assess the need for a community centre. Still no commitment as such.

In July, I asked the minister at that time, Speaker, about using that burnt-out building, renovating it and turning it into a community centre. Something that had been asked for. Then, in November, government

announces that it's sold the land to a private developer.

March 27, another fire breaks out in a vacant unit and burns down four to six units there. I could've told you why that happened. Plenty of residents have made government aware of it. I wrote the minister and then, a few weeks ago, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing announces plans to demolish the units.

I would like to know and I will urge here, rather than sell to a private developer, rebuild or turn it over to a not-for-profit. Government says it's on a hill; I would argue it's not. It's on Livingstone Street. That's level. Actually, there are two level entrances. You could make it into at least each one of those two units.

Now to the minister's credit, I've got to say, she has committed to meet with the residents and with me and to meet with my colleague from Labrador West on this. So I will commend her for that because she has that interest.

What does stay the course look like for Education? Well, for the early childhood educators, *Budget 2025* invests in operating grants, \$10-a-day child care spaces, bursaries and grants for ECE students but nothing to address the sick leave, the pension and health benefits, pay or working conditions. In other words, nothing really to address the retention piece. Anyone who has had to work with children, it's, at once, the most rewarding and most challenging. I was a high school teacher. I would not be able to handle Grade 2; that much I can tell you. Primary teachers are a different breed.

The K-to-12 education: \$20 million to increase teaching services – sounds good, but nothing to really address class composition and violence.

On the day that budget was announced, Speaker, a teacher contacted, teaching principal, on that same day he had to tell two teachers in his school that they were declared redundant. He was down by two teachers on the same day that budget announcement came out, which meant

increased teaching duties as the principal and that the full-time reading specialist was then cut to half.

That's the impact. So the question he would like to know, well, does that mean that the school is getting back those two teachers? Because the numbers say one thing, the experience says another.

Nor does it address the issue of school violence. You might remember that the Education Accord came about in response to a substitute teacher bringing attention to the violence in the classroom. Keep in mind, we're not talking about premediated violence or anything like this, we're talking about sometimes young people who just have not learned to regulate but they cause significant harm. It's a cry for help more than anything else.

At that time, there was another school where a teacher had had her jaw broken by a primary student who had swung a full water bottle at her. Again no malice intended. Last week, I had a call from another primary school, again a primary student who had thrown a chair, has almost 200 notices on the Power School, and hurt the teacher so badly, Speaker, I am not sure whether she's going to be able to come back to school, going to be able to teach again. It has affected her speech. It's affected her spine, you name it.

So I will tell you this, this is something that's been ongoing and still has not been addressed. I'll draw attention here – it's interesting because it's going to take something like another Carter Churchill case – this is a grievance decision in New Brunswick between the New Brunswick Teachers' Federation and the province. It's interesting what it says here because it awarded damages to the teacher involved and against the employer who failed to offer proper protection for their employees.

He states clearly: The harm experienced by the teacher significantly outweighs the societal value of inclusive education, that the harm suffered cannot be justified and certainly cannot be outweighed by the value

derived from the student's learning experience.

Not saying that there shouldn't be inclusive education, but the employer has to do much more to protect the employees that they're asking to work with the students.

The question I have to ask, is it going to take another grievance like the one for Carter Churchill to get this resolved? I hope not.

So the stay-the-course budget, if it's not addressing this, it's failing. It's failing the teachers and the students of this province.

MUN, Memorial: I fear, if we're not careful, we're going to kill MUN, and we need MUN to survive. Speaker, \$70 million over eight years to help with deferred maintenance in the face of, I think, it's over \$450 million deferred debt maintenance that's going to keep getting worse. It's a drop in the bucket. Even if the money is managed properly, it's still not taking in enough money to address their deferred maintenance.

Now I will ask this, imagine the impact on our economy if Memorial did not exist, or if it closed? It's the size of a small city, I would say, close to Mount Pearl. Think of the people who depend on the university, who supply its goods and services. Think of the students who pay tuition, who rent houses, who buy groceries, who take in the entertainment, who choose, then, to stay here. Think of the impact on research and renovation if our university is not up to scratch.

I hear we're hoping, not just here, but across Canada, to attract scientists and researchers from the US. What if MUN, then, has to cut programs or loses accreditation? How will that affect the ability to be that innovative centre? I believe MUN, like all education, is an investment, it's not a budget line, and we need to invest in it.

Staying the course for health is another matter I'll talk on in the last six minutes or so and where the government could have gone

further. I think it means, in this case, missing the opportunity to sign onto a federal pharmacare plan that could potentially help thousands in this province. I think, and I would say in all of our districts, we have people who are pill splitting, who are taking their medication every second day because they can't afford the cost of prescription drugs or because they don't have a medical plan or it is inadequate. And that, my colleagues, has an impact on the health and well-being of our people.

I'll go back to *Budget 2025*, the \$3 million for the redevelopment of the Janeway Children's Hospital and to relocation women's services from the Health Sciences Centre to the Janeway to create additional in-patient bed capacity at the Health Sciences Centre.

So let me be clear upfront, rather than carve out space in the Janeway, the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services and government should be investing in adding space to the Janeway and the Health Sciences Centre. We already carved out space a few months ago when they moved the freezers for the bodies down to the parking lot.

I would say from reading the report in front of me that government has failed to consult with health care professionals who care for the sick children of the province. It's a typical stay-the-course approach. It's short term, a reactive solution to a long-term problem of bed capacity at the adult hospital.

To me, it demonstrates, again, a lack of transparency which ignores the knowledge, the experience and the expertise of pediatricians, in this case. I think it disrespects the donors of the Janeway who donated under the assumption that they were supporting a children's hospital. I have supreme trust in the expertise of health care professionals on the front line, rather than a consulting firm that relies simply on data and obviously did little, if any, consulting.

So the document here: to preserve, protect and prioritize, ensuring specialized pediatric

care at the Janeway. In the executive summary, they provide a number of key concerns. Now think about this: The decision was announced to them; no opportunity for consulting. The report was written after because doctors did not feel consulted. They were not asked for this. The decision was clearly made. All you need to do is look in the budget, the decision was made.

They have a number of key concerns: the lack of stakeholder engagement, the compromised pediatric care, rising pediatric complexity and demand. As we take in more people from other countries and bringing in younger families, think about this, we're actually increasing the population of children. At least that's what we hope we're going to do. So shouldn't we be looking at increasing the services of the Janeway as opposed to trying to carve out space for the adult hospital? Should we not be looking at trying to address the needs of the adult hospital by adding space there and services?

There's a rising pediatric complexity and demand. Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest rate of medically complex children in Canada. We have people coming in with conditions that probably didn't previously exist here. There are threats: They identify threats to the pediatric education and training, donor intent and fiduciary responsibility.

They recommend: Halt the implementation of the proposed integration of adult in-patients at the Janeway; conduct an independent evidence-based review of pediatric capacity, service needs and future space planning; engage key stakeholders, Speaker, including pediatric and women's health leadership, Memorial University, patient partners and the Janeway Foundation, in all planning processes; preserve and expand the Janeway as a stand-alone pediatric tertiary-care facility focusing on the development of complex care, day treatment programs, multi-disciplinary chronic pain programs and expand patient, outpatient and multi-disciplinary clinic capacity.

I will state this as well, this is from the doctors: The assumption that there is underutilized space within the Janeway does not reflect reality – it does not reflect reality – no matter how many times the Minister of Health tells us that. Very clearly: the mischaracterization of a space being underutilized. That's how it's described.

So I think in closing here, in the last 16 seconds, we have a chance, we have an opportunity here to move beyond the harbour where the ships are safest and to do something that's really going to benefit the people of this province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER (Trimper): Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, it's nice to get on the floor and talk about the budget. It gives me an opportunity, of course, to speak about things that are happening in my district for the people that put me here to be able to talk about the issues and concerns in our district and talk about the budget of course.

One thing that I didn't see in this budget, again as I combed around it, was health care. There are some things on health care but, of course, we know that 24-hour emergency service at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre, which is very, very important to the people of the Exploits District, especially at Botwood and the outlying areas of Leading Tickles, Point Leamington, Fortune Harbour and the surrounding areas there.

It's something that's very dear to them. The Liberal government cut the 24-hour service back in 2016, which caused many frustrations and many concerns of how to deal with the health care concerns then at that time at the 24-hour emergency service in regard to travelling to Grand Falls-

Windsor Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre, which would be the nearest location at that time to receive emergency services. We're talking emergency services. People need emergency services when they need emergency services as fast as they can get emergency services, and I do stress emergency services.

This leads to, in the past little while of course, a lack of doctors, lack of physicians, especially at the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre and in other locations. I saw it again this week – only this week I did see it – diversions from Connaigre, Lewisporte, Buchans, Springdale and other areas.

Interesting note on that, though, they don't call it diversions no more. They just say that virtual care is available at those locations. They don't say that it's diverted anymore and it don't tell you to go to the next available emergency unit. They just say that virtual care is now available at such a site. That's an interesting thing, that they don't say that it is diverted, but it is. It is diverted and we see more and more. Last week when I was home, I did see it. The ones that I just mentioned as well. On different days there were diversions to the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre, which overloads the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre. It's a known fact.

People in the district and people in the Central area see it. It's overwhelming. They're on stretchers, they're in corridors, they're in chairs, a lack of beds all because, of course, a lack of doctors in the other areas, and lack of services. That forces long wait times at the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre. I've heard wait times as much as 10 or 12 hours for seniors. Seniors sitting in an emergency room, sick enough as it is, but they're aging and their health is probably not what it used to be and they're sitting in the emergency services in gurneys, chairs, whatever, waiting for those services.

Whereas if the 24-hour emergency services was reinstated – as promised, by the way, in the past two elections by the Liberal

candidates, by the Liberal premiers. It's been promised two elections. I'm not here because this doesn't make sense. If the 24-hour emergency services was reinstated – again, as promised – at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre, this would certainly alleviate the stress off the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre.

That hospital in Botwood is certainly an updated hospital. In 2014, the former, former government spent over \$4 million on that hospital. They opened a new X-ray lab and blood lab. Everything done to the state of the art right there in that hospital only for, in 2016, to take away the 24-hour emergency services after spending all that money on upgrading that hospital.

I think it was said by the minister now, in 2018, that once the long-term care at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre was up and running, they'd look at reinstating the 24-hour emergency services. It was certainly said by a former premier, I know that, back in 2019. It was certainly said by a former premier and we know who that is. If the minister didn't say it then I'll retract that, but I know it was said by a former premier that once the long-term care in Botwood was up and running, that they would reinstate the 24-hour emergency services – never done.

The long-term care there is up and running; it has been for quite a while, which is a good thing. We needed that as well, but we have a full operating facility with no 24-hour emergency services. As noted in a news article, I think last week, it was indicated by the new CEO of NL Health Services that those emergency services might be better served by a Family Care Team. Will that Family Care Team be open 24 hours? Will that Family Care Team be able to accept emergency patients 24 hours?

Not the way that it's working now. It's not intended for that, not right now. They're on a daily shift. I know; I see it. Family Care Teams work and they work well. They do exceptional work, I must say. The nurse practitioners that are there, they do quite well assessing some of the patients with the

appointments that they do, but some of the Family Care Teams, especially in Central Newfoundland, are still accepting names back from 2018 and 2020. They're on a list but they're not called. They're on a list somewhere but they're not called.

To indicate that the 24-hour emergency services may be better served by a Family Care Team when you've got a full operating facility, and to lose that? That area services upwards of 7,000 people on a full operating hospital. All it needs is to reinstate the 24-hour emergency services. MUN uses that hospital to train some of their interns, which is good again. Some of those interns, if we had 24-hour emergency services and a full operating hospital, that would entice them to stay.

Actually, I've heard that from a couple of interns that have been to Botwood and been to that area, they'd love it. They love it there; they would love to stay. They would love to stay in that area, which would be a great opportunity for them to do so. It would be a great opportunity for government to increase service in the rural areas, which I think can be done. If we're going to keep those young interns coming out of the system, coming out of the schools, going into our health care facilities, making things work the way that it should work, then we need to do that.

To hear the CEO of NL Health Services say that this may be better served by a Family Care Team, that makes me very, very concerned of what may happen to the 24-hour emergency service at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre – and I mean emergency services. The Family Care Teams can work but, if it's being indicated, I fear what may happen to emergency services at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre.

If we can get that reinstated, the 24-hour emergency services, service all those people in that area, people waiting long distances to travel in that area, especially in the winter time. Leading Tickle's, Fortune Harbour, again, Point Leamington and outlying areas, if we can get those people at

the emergency services in the middle of the winter instead of driving an hour and a half, probably two hours, in the middle of the winter – you got a big strain on the drivers, you got a big strain on the patients – when they can't get right to emergency services.

Again, someone in Botwood themselves, they can, just knowing that they're in an emergency after 8 p.m. and they need to get to an emergency with their own facility probably just two minutes away from them – probably just two minutes away – when they can get transported right to that facility – it may be a life-threatening situation. I'm not saying it is, but they can be treated and looked at probably in five minutes or 10 minutes, instead of having to drive an hour to get to the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre.

So again, Family Care Teams do work. They do great work, they really do and I've got to say that some of the people who have used the Family Care Teams, they like it. There's nothing wrong with it, but it doesn't replace the emergency care services that you need when it's an emergency. It's not somewhere you can call. No, b'y, I've got to wait two weeks before I can get an appointment to come because I really have a severed hand, I have a severed arm or I have a bad laceration down the leg. I cannot wait two weeks to get an appointment; I need emergency services.

That 24-hour emergency service needs to be reinstated to streamline the health care services in Central Newfoundland at this moment. The 24-hour emergency service needs to be reinstated as promised and should be done and should've already been done in the past little while. It should never have closed. It shouldn't have closed in 2016. There was no need of it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: The people of the Exploits District, Speaker, deserve better than that. They deserve better than that. They deserve better than having their hospital 24-hour emergency cut in 2016 and they deserve better, way better, than someone

coming out and making a promise and then not doing it. That doesn't work.

Anyway, Speaker, that is one of the big issues in my district right now, the emergency services and that comes from Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre in Grand Falls-Windsor to the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre in Botwood where those services could be streamlined and the situations there could be monitored a lot better.

Some more issues in my district, Speaker, I'll just say roads – I'll speak about roads again. I get continuous emails on roads, different areas of bad conditions of roads, people ruining tires, ruining rims, potholes and it's a continuous story. I know there are other areas in the province that need roadwork as well. I understand that. I really, really understand that, but when I look in the five-year road plans, again this year – and every time, by the way, I ask the minister about it or ask one of the ministers or talk to one of them: oh, it's in the five year road plan; what would be your worst areas?

Every year, I put in the same three basic big areas, the top priority of or what I figure would be the priority areas and do I see it? No. In some areas, we have gotten it on the Trans-Canada Highway but, on Route 350, we're not getting the roads fixed the way it should be.

Now, this year, I am getting 4.5 kilometres in one section of Route 350. I am getting that, which I thank the government for and I appreciate it – on Route 350, I'm finally getting 4 kilometres. Every year, I put in about 12 kilometres, three sections of fours, and I've done this now for about – well, I've been here six years, so I've done it for six years. So I'm finally getting 4.5 kilometres on Route 350.

Now, Route 340 runs down through another district, Route 350 is sort of in the middle and Route 360 goes to another district. When I look at the Roads Plan this year, Route 340 in another district, I saw a paving section from one community to another community and, if I'm reading that right,

that's 20 kilometres right there in a certain district.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where?

P. FORSEY: In a Liberal district, actually.

There are other areas of that, so there are 20 kilometres on Route 340 in that district; in my district, I'm getting 4.5. That's Route 340 getting at least 20 that I know of. Route 350 getting 4.5, then you go to Route 360 and there's more being done on Route 360 towards another district.

So to get to Route 340 to Route 360, they'll figure, oh well, we should drop off 4.5 kilometers of pavement along the way through Route 350 to go to Route 360, and that's what we get. That's what we end up with is pieces but we have very serious road conditions in our area, we really do, on Route 350 – the main artery from Bishop's Falls to Leading Tickle. Now, Route 352 is there, 351A and 351, there are lots of areas there, but Route 350 is the main artery for the Exploits District and there are sections there that are really rough, really bad and even tourists complain about it.

I know that other areas, other parts of the province hear it too, but when you see a Liberal district, one close to you getting 20 kilometres and another one on the other side of you getting – I don't know exactly how many kilometres they're going to get this year, but you know they're scheduled for paving work as well. When you're stuck in the middle and you get 4.5 kilometres, you have to wonder. At least be fair about it. Give us our due share of what we need. I mean you shouldn't have to apply for six years in a row, the same sections of four kilometres each of each section, and in five years, I got four kilometres.

That's not playing the game here. Give us a good share. Give us our share to keep our roads updated. To keep our roads safe for the people who are driving them. They're driving them; they've got the 24-hour emergency service closed in Botwood in the wintertime after 8 p.m. so, in the wintertime, they've got to drive a bit farther now on a

bad road. They're not doing safety efforts very much for the Exploits District. If that's what they're forcing them to do, drive farther in the wintertime on bad roads, pass by the 24-hour emergency service at 8 p.m., go somewhere else on the bad roads, there's no need of.

Again, tourists use that road. I get many calls from the tourists. The first thing they ask for – bang – when they lose a tire, who's the MHA in this area b'ys? Who's the MHA? Where's his office to?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. FORSEY: Yup.

Oh yeah, here it is. Here's his name. Here's his office. Actually, there's his number. The day after, sling goes the phone: Mr. MHA, I busted my tire going to Leading Ticks today. Yes, you're not the only one; I'm getting a number of calls like that.

So we need those roads fixed. I'm not here just to say this just for something to say. I'm hearing this from my constituents every day. We need more attention to those roads so that we can have those roads updated and kept up and the safety of the people travelling those roads can be done –

SPEAKER: Sorry, the Member's time has expired.

P. FORSEY: With that, Speaker, I can see my time has expired.

SPEAKER: Sorry, the Member's time has expired. I'm sorry.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Next speaker, please.

I now recognize the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the MHA for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, it's an honour to be given the opportunity to debate the budget. This is my first time. My opinion of the budget: It's more of an urban, than a non-rural, budget. It's definitely a political election budget. I want to talk about some of the issues that are haunting us in my district and there's a whole sector of different things that are not being taken care of and I will start with the roads and the infrastructure in my district.

We have several areas of the district, both on the mainland side and on the Fogo Island side, that the roads are in what you would call a deplorable condition – a very unsafe condition. When you have to drive from the right side to the left side, that's not a good practice. I know we have maintenance depots, both on the mainland and on the island, but their hands are sort of tied, too, when it comes to doing the maintenance on roads. I've heard a lot of complaints about equipment breakdowns and, lo and behold, so much as gravel, they don't have the backing to go out and fill up those potholes for the time being. There are holes there that you can do damage to your vehicles and there's been damage done all through the district. I'm hearing it every day.

So we have to start putting more money back into rural areas of the province. As I said before, Fogo Island - Cape Freels is definitely not a burden on this government. We are putting hundreds of millions of dollars into the economy but we're not getting it back. I think it's a very unfair process. I think the structure is wrong. We should be given repairs and roadwork and infrastructure on needs. It should be based on the needs of what's going on.

I mean, if this continues to go on like it's happening, this province is going to have to come up with a lot, lot more money to replace some of the homes and sheds and things that are going to be washed out to sea if we get more storms like we had a while ago. We're living on an island of rock and all it takes is lots of armour stone, bank in so you can kill the surge and then you can repair the roads and they won't be washed out, but that's not happening.

They're just letting it bide by and just waiting for another storm and then, you know, here comes a lot of people putting in claims and, in a lot of cases, they're not getting anything in return. So we have to, first of all, do it on a fair basis.

I have to go back to say, Fogo Island and Change Islands, we have a little bit of a different situation. We're living on two islands. Our highway is our ferries. God only knows that we are gone down in service, gone back 30 to 40 years when it comes to service. We have two Labrador ferries there operating right now which are leased out to the government and because of the piers that are there, half the time they're cancelling trips because of the high tides and neither ferry. This is alarming to the people of Fogo Island. Even with a southwest wind, which is a speedboat wind, you can't go out in any more than 20 knots of wind. I mean, it's unacceptable what's going on in the district.

We have a ferry terminal in Farewell that only has one offloading ramp. Now, the Department of Transportation had come up with a scenario that they were going to build two mobile ramps, one on the Farewell side and one on the Fogo Island side. But when they realized that this was only going to be a ramp to suit the Kamutik, the larger ferry, we can't put one on the Farewell side because there's only one offloading there.

This has to be fixed. We need two offloading – that's the main part of ferry operations, starts off in Farewell. We, with one ramp there, we have two on Fogo Island and we have two on Change Islands but only one on the main core. Something has to change with the transportation system.

I mean, we have areas of the province, down in New-Wes-Valley, all up through as far as Hare Bay that we need culvert replacements; we need brush cutting. I mean, something so simple as brush cutting, I have 10 kilometres last year on the upper end of the district, that's all I got.

My God when I go back years ago, when they were talking about brush cutting, there were jobs for people. They were out in the fall of the year with their chainsaws and making money, everything was going good and everything like that. I don't know why we don't bring this program again. If we can't fix it with what we have, we have to do something about it.

These are safety issues we're talking about. This has to change. It's not all about urban; it's time that you thought about rural areas of this province, the backbone of this province, the people who put us here. They're mostly seniors now but it's nothing paid back – nothing paid back.

I'll touch on health care. We have the same problem with health care in my district as we got in every other district: long time waiting, lying on stretchers in the corridors. I have to go back to the Health Care Centre on Fogo Island. We have a job with doctors. Most of the appointments you get are all virtual. You can stay home and google yourself and find out what's wrong with you and probably prescribe something for yourself.

Right now, and we were told in the by-election last spring, that it was an extension going on to Fogo Island Health Care Centre. I didn't see anything in the budget for it and I just learned that ultrasound technician has been off for months, beyond my awareness until just a few days ago, and has not been replaced. The rumour right now is that they're going to remove the ultrasound machine from Fogo Island back to Gander. So I don't know where the fairness comes into it there either.

Then we have no family room in that facility for the families of the loved ones who are down to their last few days and need to spend time with them. This is unacceptable – this is unacceptable. Those are the kinds of things that have to change.

I got cases where I've got calls – I know one gentleman; he's a single dad with two kids. He works at a Foodland on Fogo Island and his insulin is costing him \$500 to \$600 a month and he can't get no return on

anything. It just comes out of his own pocket. I mean, that's sad, someone who's in the workforce that's living out in rural areas not to get that kind of support. I had calls from people about nothing for disabilities. They're forgot about. There's not enough money going into disabilities.

The other one I want to touch on, because a lot of our people, especially on the island's portion of the province, were sent to Gander, were sent to Clarendville, were sent to St. John's or wherever, and that's MTAP. There has to be increasing funds in MTAP to pay for their travel. People just can't afford it. People are falling behind in the rural areas.

Again, I want to touch on safer towns. That's putting a lot of stress on our seniors in those communities. I mean, it seems like there's nothing happening – nothing happening – and every day we're hearing about a shutdown because there's someone going off with a rifle or a shotgun. That's getting more frequent all the time. Maybe we'll have to go back to Matt Dillon on *Gunsmoke* and see if we can bring in someone like him to see if he can control it.

The other thing is the shingle vaccines. We heard it here today. We heard it when we did the PMR on it and we were turned down with it. But I agree, we need that support for 50 up. It should be paid for. It definitely has to go in place, and I hope that the Finance Minister realizes that and changes something in this budget for that.

Then I want to go back to the district with small business. There are some supports there for restaurants but there are a lot of other small businesses besides restaurants that are finding it very difficult to keep their operations going, especially with the rising of the minimum wage, which I do support. I think there should be some programs in place that help them out with this particular increase so that they can stay in business.

Then we've got other types of business that there's no money going into, and that's like the small construction companies, you've got to cut out the red tape. Those people

are employing as high as 10 to 12 people in some of those construction companies. They're shrinking because they can't get their permits. There are more regulations, too much regulations, and that has to change.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: That also includes the sawmill operators. They're facing the same problem with their permits. There's plenty of woods in Newfoundland; there's tons of it. I mean, there's no shortage of forestry here in Newfoundland.

Again, the farmers and they're not getting the supports that they need. We could be growing more of our own products and they talk about buying local – yes, then we could buy local. This is the kind of things that the emphasis should be put on and if you want to spend the money right, well then these are the things we have to do.

I also want to touch on the cost of living with seniors and that goes back to we asked for a 20 per cent increase of the Seniors' Benefit package. They never gave it to them. With that 15 per cent, they will never catch up with inflation. This will never change. So they should go back through the budget and look at that 20 per cent mark and give people a bit of peace and comfort in their homes and let them be able to live comfortably and buy a decent meal.

The other one I want to touch on is the fishery, and I've always got to go back to the fishery because that's the backbone of this province. That's what put us here and that's what's going to keep us here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: That's why we need a stand-alone fishery. We definitely need a stand-alone fishery and get a grip on things. We could be doing more along secondary processing. We're passing by hundreds of jobs, lots of money going back into the economy and we're just not looking at any of this anymore.

I don't understand it, because I know in the upper part of my district, in Centreville we have a boat-building operation there which is phenomenal. They're employing probably 30 or 40 people. We have Cran-Pac Foods there who's employing a lot of people. There are other small industries that should be developed and that money would go back into the economy, would bring in more jobs, more people would settle down in the communities and so on and so forth.

When we talk about the ferry – I have to go back to the ferry for a second – the crossings are limited. You don't know when you're not going to get across to the other side. We are paying a road tax, same as anyone else, and that's our highway. From Farewell to Fogo Island, Change Islands, that's our highway.

Not only are we paying road tax, we are also paying to cross. We have to buy our tickets to go across. So we're getting a double whammy in one sense of speaking. I don't know why there's not more money put back into that particular part of the infrastructure. It has to change if we're going to grow, because I know we're losing a lot of money out of the economy of Fogo Island and we're losing a lot of tourism on Fogo Island for the same reason.

We have tourists come down there to Farewell and saw the situation, turned around and left and went to Twillingate somewhere. So we lost out there. So our Airbnbs on Fogo Island are suffering. Our restaurants are suffering. Small business in general is suffering. That affects the whole of Fogo Island, Change Islands in that part of the district.

In the mainland part, at least they have a highway they can drive – in disrespect of how bad the condition is, at least they can go. But we have to come up with more monies for transportation and infrastructure in the district. That has to happen. It just can't go on and on and on.

Roads are in a very deplorable condition all around the Carmanville-Frederickton area. It starts off at the intersection to Stoneville to the intersection of the Road to the Isles. It's

in a ridiculous situation. It's deplorable, it's dangerous and it's not safe. That's where the heaviest part of our brush needs to be cut, all along there up to Carmanville, all the way up to Musgrave Harbour.

Then even in Musgrave Harbour itself – they asked me to speak on this – they're the only town in the district that's responsible for their own road, the main road. They have nine kilometres of road, one way, and you should see the state the roads are in. They can't even get snow clearing, yet the snow plow operator lives in Musgrave Harbour. They're driving the road in the morning with their blade up because they have to go up and do the main roads, the highway. None of this makes sense to me. This has to change.

I want to go back to the seniors again. As I said before, we need to put more money into home care. There's nothing in the budget that I saw for home care. We need to keep the seniors in their own homes. They want to stay in their own homes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: I think we should be giving them the privilege of staying in their own homes.

Home care workers: There's a job to get the home care workers anymore because they're only a little over a \$1 difference pay rate than the minimum wage. I mean, look at the responsibilities of a home care worker. Not only that, the care that those seniors would get, the mental stability alone and knowing that they're in their own homes and take away some of the expenses from the long-term care facilities. Right now in Valleyfield, Bonnews long-term facility, they're starting to double up the rooms, putting two people in the rooms. They're only tiny rooms and people are calling me and saying this is unacceptable. It's putting a lot of stress on those people who are there. Some of those are not in good health conditions either, you know.

So these are the kinds of things that hurt me when I hear those kinds of calls from my

constituents. Like I told them, I'm doing everything I can but it seems like, to me, there is only thing that's going to change this and that's us, on this side of the House, when we're sitting over there –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: – and we will make all those changes.

Again, I have to go back to the whole district in general, all the costs that's placed on us because of the health care system and the way it's set up and the people who have to be transferred from one hospital to the other. I even had a situation the other day where a gentleman in my district, in Musgrave Harbour, had a serious heart attack.

He was transported to Gander. They had to wait to stabilize him. They finally got him into St. John's, did the dye test, and he got a serious amount of blockages. Sends him back to Gander again, and right up to Sunday, when I visited the gentleman here in St. John's, he still never had his surgery. He's still waiting on his surgery. To me, that's serious stuff. That's a matter of life and death.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I now recognize the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm certainly glad to have the opportunity to speak to the budget for the first time, and I guess we'll have a couple more opportunities besides this.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to start by saying – and this is something I'm not sure if I've heard it said this afternoon. I'm not sure if I've really heard it said since we started the budget, to be honest. I just want to preface

the remark I'm going to make by saying that I believe that, certainly my colleagues here on this side of the House – and I don't mean that disparagingly to my colleagues on the other side of the House, but they haven't spoken yet.

But, in fairness, my colleagues on this side of the House, so far today and prior to today, they're doing their job. They're raising the issues on behalf of their constituents. And every time they're saying this road is in bad shape, that road is in bad shape and so on, our emergency centre is not open, we got issues with there's not enough housing, we don't have enough doctors, not enough teachers, whatever the case might be, those are things that they're hearing from their constituents, and they're legit. They're doing their job by raising these issues. So I certainly don't fault them for that, I really don't.

I generally don't have a whole lot of asks, so to speak, in my district. Certainly not when it comes to roads and stuff –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) brush cutting.

P. LANE: Happy with brush cutting he said – because of the district that I represent, Mount Pearl - Southlands, right in the heart of the metro area. Quite frankly, when it comes to fire services and waste management, roads, water, sewer, all those things, I don't have to deal with those issues because they're dealt with by the large municipalities which I represent.

Yes, the City of St. John's, the City of Mount Pearl, they do receive some multi-year capital funding as do all the urban municipalities but, beyond that, when it comes to all these other services, when it comes to asphalt, when it comes to water and sewer and so on, beyond that multi-year capital that they get from time to time, it's paid for by the taxpayers of St. John's and of Mount Pearl and the same in the other urban districts.

They're fortunate. Let's call a spade a spade. Because you have that

concentration of population, that density, that you have lots of people paying taxes and, naturally, you're able to pay for these things. You have a lot of businesses, a huge centre of commerce – this area is the centre of commerce for the province. It's the capital region. That's the reality here. It's the reality in every other jurisdiction.

Naturally, when you have that large population and, of course, that's relative – a small population compared to other parts of the country and the world. But in terms of in Newfoundland, you have that large population, you have that large business base and they're all paying municipal taxes as well, and that's why they're able to have all these amenities whether it be recreation, whether it be walking trails, whether it be roads and fire services and everything else.

I get why sometimes if you're living in a small, rural area and you don't have that concentration of population that's paying those taxes, you don't have that business space, then you don't have those services. When you look at it and you do a comparator, I absolutely understand why some say, my God, they've got everything in St. John's. They've got it all. We don't have anything. I understand that but, unfortunately, it is a reality of population density and so on. It's a reality.

Does that mean that rural Newfoundland should not have comparable services and so on, have good services? No, it doesn't mean that. I think that in every provincial budget, the government of the day, whoever that government is – and quite frankly, the majority of Members represent rural districts more than urban, and they all have their say and their input and rural Newfoundland does receive a lot of services. Now, is it always up to par? Absolutely not. I totally agree.

It's not always up to par here either but certainly when it comes to some services in rural Newfoundland, absolutely, there are issues and it's not up to par – 100 per cent appreciate that. It's not an easy balance for the government, no matter who that government is, to provide those services.

Now, I can recall the time in this House of Assembly – it was only myself and the Member for Port aux Basques who had been here at the time and it was the former Member for CBS and he used to have this big, giant calculator that he used to bring into the House. Every time Members on the opposite side would get up and say we need money for this, money for that, he'd take out the giant calculator and he used to add it all up and say, where's the money coming from? Particularly when it was the Third Party, they used to do a lot of asking.

Certainly, listening to my colleague from St. John's Centre earlier, you could see all the stuff that he was talking about. We need more money for housing. There should be no budget number on education, whatever we need, we need. Give MUN whatever they want.

I understand what he's saying and I appreciate that, but here's the part that I haven't really heard a lot of emphasis on. The reality of it is – and I don't have the exact number in front of me here, but I believe courtesy of this budget, the addition of this budget, our province's net debt is going to be north of \$19 billion, with a B, this year. We're predicting a deficit of, I think, over \$350 million, \$370 million, whatever it is, to add on to the existing net debt. Like I said, over \$19 billion.

Now if we were to also add on the unfunded pension liabilities and other liabilities and so on, I believe we're up to probably closer to \$30 billion, in reality, for a province of a half million people. That is a heck of a lot of debt. One number I do know, that's here in the budget, our debt servicing costs alone this year is \$1.2 billion. We're spending as much on debt servicing almost as we're going to spend on education. The only thing bigger than that is health. That's just debt servicing. It's huge, it's a problem –

AN HON. MEMBER: It is not sustainable.

P. LANE: My colleague says it's not sustainable and it's not sustainable.

That's why I did want to preface that while I absolutely hear what my colleagues are saying and they are doing their job – and I've asked for stuff in the past too, certain things. I was very pleased to see the investment in this budget that's going to go into education with those additional teachers and student assistants because we darn well need them. Everybody knows we do and I congratulate the government for doing that. It needs to be done.

But there is a cost that we always have to remember – there's a cost. I had discussions with constituents and non-constituents, just people in general and you'd be surprised that a number of people out there that just sort of think, oh, don't worry about it, the government got money. How many times have I had that conversation about the government having money? The government don't have money; the government don't have a cent. The government in itself do not have one dime. The government's money is our money.

I've said this before – every time you get your cheque, if you get a cheque, or you look at your deposit now these days in your bank account, you look at your gross pay and you look at your net pay, and you quickly deduct that my net pay is pretty gross, when you look at all the taxes that are coming out, going to various levels of government.

Nobody likes paying taxes. Who likes paying taxes? Nobody. I hate paying taxes. I'm sure that every one of my constituents hates paying taxes, but it's a necessary evil because government has no money on its own. If you want doctors, you have to pay for them. If you want schools and teachers, you have to pay for them. If you want asphalt, you have to pay for it. If you want ferries, you have to pay for it. If you want more housing, you have to pay for it.

If you cut taxes, you either have to cut some service or go deeper into debt. Or you could raise more revenue. We know that economic development is obviously important, and we have to constantly be looking at ways to raise more revenue. I

totally agree with that. It sounds nice to say we're going to raise more revenue, economic development – sounds great. Not so easy to do, I would say.

I heard my colleague from St. John's - Centre talk about Memorial University and the fact that we're going to give them, I think, \$70 million or \$80 million over the next number of years for infrastructure. There's no doubt that MUN has an infrastructure deficit. We didn't need the Auditor General to tell us that; all you had to do was go in there and take a look around. For the last number of years, it's been blatantly obvious that there's an infrastructure issue at Memorial University. We all know it.

I do support assisting the university, but we cannot simply write cheques and walk away. We cannot do that. Given the Auditor General's two scathing reports, one after the other, one on operations, the other on infrastructure and when you look at that report and what came out of that report, and how things were managed, or mismanaged, whatever words that you want to call it, when you look at the fact that apparently there is unused space within the university, we'll leave vacant space and then we'll go and lease space somewhere, it makes no sense. It makes no sense.

So I would say to the government that while I will support the concept of assisting MUN with infrastructure, and it is our university and we should be proud of it and we should support it, I hope there are strings attached. I hope there is oversight attached. This whole idea, there's nothing wrong with academic autonomy, nothing wrong with it, but we've seen what's happened when there was total autonomy outside of just the academia and operations and infrastructure, we've seen what has happened.

So I would hope that there will be strings attached and someone will be following up from the Department of Education to ensure that infrastructure money going to MUN is actually spent on infrastructure and that it makes sense, it's being prioritized, it's being

spent in the right places. That would be my thought on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: I want to talk about seniors for a minute, too. We all support seniors, of course we do. Some of us are soon going to be seniors. We're getting closer all the time. Hopefully, we will be seniors. Not everybody has that privilege; not everybody makes it. I hope I do. We all support them and so we should.

I have no problem with cost-of-living measures to try to help seniors, absolutely not. But I will say this – I'm just going to talk about the seniors' supplement for a minute. I'm glad that it was indexed, but here's the thing, though, and I think this is important to understand and be said as well: Do we not feel – I feel – that the federal government is getting off the hook? I feel the federal government is getting off the hook. Is it really provincial government's mandate to be providing supplements to seniors so that they can keep up with the cost of living, or shouldn't that be the responsibility of the federal government? Isn't that why we have OAS and CPP and supplements?

So the fact of the matter is, the feds are falling short in terms of supporting seniors, not just in this province but across the country, and now we're taking it upon ourselves as a provincial government with our scarce resources, trying to cut and save and give increases and give supplements to seniors so they can put food on the table, so they don't have to go cutting medications in half, so they can heat their home. We're doing a home rebate program that can heat their home. We're giving them that \$500 to help them so they can stay in their home with people to shovel snow or get their groceries or whatever the case might be. We're doing all that stuff. We're giving them this supplement, approximately \$2,000 a year and the federal government are walking away scot-free. They're the ones who have the money and the ability to do it.

So I would say something that we should all be united in, especially now that we have a

federal election, but all the time, we should be harping on the federal government: Why are you not providing enough money to seniors through the OAS, CPP programs so that we don't need to be subsidizing them? We don't need to be subsidizing them. So that's something, again, the feds are totally getting off the hook and then we're having to fill in these gaps. It's a challenge in terms of the money for us to be able to do these things.

Another thing is equalization. That's a fight that we have to continue with the federal government as well. You look at the revenues that Quebec is taking in, as an example. I know, the boogeyman Quebec, but Quebec over the years are taking all this revenue with their hydro projects and so on and they've managed to concoct a way that it doesn't count against them in terms of equalization. And here we are, the small province, struggling with great geographic issues, population issues, infrastructure deficits and so on and we've really been getting the short end of the stick when it comes to equalization and Quebec is over there getting billions. There's something wrong with that as well.

These are fights that we should be in together. Same as our fisheries and trying to get some joint management and trying to fix this buddy-up system and trying to fix the issue with the seals and everything else. These are things that we should be in together regardless of what side of the House we're on. These are federal issues that are impacting our province and our people and if we could make progress with some of these issues, I think it would help our ability to help our citizens. Money for equalization, increases to the OAS and CPP and the ability to have more say in our fishery to grow that industry for our province.

Another point I want to raise – I'm starting to run out of time here – on the one hand, I was glad to see an investment into our oil and gas industry to exploration. That's something that I personally support. I've always supported our oil and gas industry. Some people have taken me to task for it a

bit. The environmental issues, I get it, but I will still maintain the world isn't coming off oil any time soon. You've still got rubber tires. You've still got plastic and everything else. They're all petroleum products. If they don't buy our oil in a safe, regulated area using the most modern environmentally friendly practices that exist, if they don't buy it here, they're going to buy it in Russia. They're going to buy it in the Middle East. They're going to buy it in Venezuela somewhere. So it may as well be our oil and gas.

So I do agree with trying to prompt more exploration, but I would say this, if we're going to invest our money into exploration, it's a waste of money, unless we have assurances – here we go again, the federal government once again – that once we invest money and if people take us up on it and they start drilling and they find oil, we need assurances that the federal government is not going to just scrap those projects or put all these roadblocks in the way to prevent these projects from happening.

If not, it's a waste of money. It all sounds good. It sounds good, but it only works if the feds on the other side are going to approve them.

Now I'm hopeful that there's been discussions and maybe since Mr. Guilbeault has left and so on, maybe the new regime, if they win – I don't know who's going to win yet but I'm pretty sure the Conservatives are going to be favourable to us in terms of oil and gas. I'm not sure with the new Liberals under Carney. I'm not sure how that's going to go, to be honest with you. That's one of my biggest concerns, federally, if the Liberals were to win, again, is that the oil and gas industry is a concern for me.

But we do need to make sure, before we start throwing lots and lots of money, scarce dollars that we don't have, in the oil industry for exploration, we do need to ensure, on the federal end, that we are going to have a government that is going to be willing to see those projects through to fruition.

I see I'm out of time but I look forward to the next opportunity.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to rise in this hon. House and represent the people of my District of Cape St. Francis and today to have the pleasure to speak to *Budget 2025* here in debate, which of course was brought to the House on Wednesday, April 9.

Speaker, when we look at the budget or any budget I ask the question, does it address the collective needs of the people of the province? I went back to my handwritten notes, because I kept them from each year that I've been here, and I'll go back to *Budget 2023*, titled *Your Health. Our Priority*.

At that time in debate what I spoke about, respecting the district and the people across the province that reached out, was with wait times in emergency rooms, was with recruitment and retention of doctors and nurses. It was seniors and having the ability to live comfortably in their own homes, or when the need arises, assessment for personal care or long-term care homes. The needs of the students and teachers from K-12, not only in my district, but again, across the province with respect to education and the violence in schools. And having a solid economic plan. Those were the things that I touched on in my speaking time in *Budget 2023*.

So when we listen to the debate here in this hon. House for *Budget 2025* I ask myself the question, where's the progress? If we are discussing the same issues two years later – and I realize, and it's been known and said here many times in this hon. House, the restraints that the government works under. That's been recognized and acknowledged, and that's respected. But

when we look at the amount of progress made in those two years I ask myself the question, what can we do? What can we do different? What choices are government making if we're still talking about the same issues two years later?

When we look at the cost of living, what is in this budget document to curb the cost of living for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? What measures were put in place to alleviate the cost-of-living pressures that all people are under? When you look at the issues in health care alone and the issues that we're discussing two years later, health care is inaccessible for many – those without a family doctor or nurse practitioners. We have lengthy wait times in our ERs. We have ERs in our province, as my colleague from Exploits says, that are closed. And those that are open have lengthy wait times.

We have many examples. One that I can think of from most recent is a constituent of mine, who I've known for years, who went to the emergency room as the Health Sciences complex last week and was there for 12 hours, until she asked her husband to take her home. She came back the next day for the same care that she didn't get the day before and was there for 16 hours before she saw a medical professional.

In 2025, Speaker, I don't care which side of the House you're on, that's unacceptable to wait that length of time in an ER, and the day before to choose to go home because you weren't well enough to sit there any longer. That, Speaker, speaks volumes when you're looking at where we were in 2023 and where we are in 2025.

I realize the line item in the budget for NL Health Services. One of my colleagues said earlier today that you can't just throw money at a situation and solve it, that's not as easy as that, but we do have the continued issues within our health care services, as we did from two years ago.

We discussed here several times today and questions were asked in this hon. House with respect to the shingles vaccine. We

know that here in this House on March 12, His Majesty's Official Opposition, the Progressive Conservative Official Opposition, that the PMR was voted down and we've had examples here of questions asked that full coverage is needed.

Well, we do know that it's \$160 per dose and you need two of those in order to be fully vaccinated. We have many seniors who simply just can't afford that. It was mentioned today from an hon. colleague of turning down the heat and splitting pills and doing what have you to get by that seniors are faced with. But with respect to this dose, my colleague from Baie Verte - Green Bay said on the 9th of April: It's an investment, a significant return on investment when it comes to the shingles vaccine with respect to if you're vaccinated. It's a 20 per cent less change of developing dementia. That is a significant return on investment when it comes to seniors being fully vaccinated with the shingles vaccine.

So I'm interested to see where this is going to go, if the current government are going to make changes with the shingles vaccine, how it's going to be covered or rolled out; but it will certainly make a difference to the lives of many seniors, not only in my district, but across our province, who simply just cannot afford that vaccine.

With respect to the rising cost of living, Speaker, we look at how that is linked to increased usage at our food bank. Today, I had the opportunity to recognize a constituent of mine with a Member's statement, Mrs. Madonna Galway from Torbay, and the amount of work that she did over the last 28 years with her late husband, Leo, and the people that they served with respect and commitment and the difference that they made in those lives.

Well, Madonna stepped down as the chair on her 78th birthday, and I certainly commend her for the work that she done. The individuals that are now at the board of the Northeast Avalon Food Bank, I meet with them and I speak with them regularly. I do what I can to volunteer and to assist them in their engagement in the community.

But they are certainly seeing the increased numbers, Speaker.

They are seeing increased numbers of people at the food bank, and I can only link it to the lack of a poverty reduction plan and prevention strategy. Had we continued with that, what was in place prior to 2015, what difference would that make today? What difference would that make to the people, not only of my district, but to the people of the province who are availing of food banks?

I know that is not a single district issue, that's across the province. I'm sure my hon. colleagues on the opposite side of the House are witnessing the same with respect to increased usage in our food banks. I can tell you people who once volunteered at a food bank or donated to a food bank are now reaching out to me asking, how do I avail of it?

Speaker, when you are engaged and committed to your district, as I know all of us are, that certainly hits home. When you're at a kitchen table, if it's seniors, if it's a young family with young children, if it's blue-collared workers, everyone is struggling with the crisis that we're involved in, the cost-of-living crisis, and I go back to how this soaring, cost-of-living crisis could have been addressed with respect to the budget.

Speaker, I have several other things that I hope I'm going to get them all in on time. I want to speak with respect to the personal care homes, and it was mentioned here today. My hon. colleague from CBS brought up the personal care homes. In addition to, of course, being MHA, I serve proudly on the Public Accounts Committee. That's chaired by my hon. colleague from Exploits.

I can certainly say with all Members on the Public Accounts Committee that are in this House that serve with me on that, we are serving together when it comes to the work Public Accounts are doing in conjunction with the Auditor General. I firmly believe we're all pulling on the one oar when it comes to that, regardless of what side of the House or what party we sit with. I'm very

proud of that, and I commend all Members and I commend the staff, of course, that helps us with that as well.

The work that was done in the last Auditor General's report, yes, it was scathing, but yes, it had to be done because we have many personal care homes around our province who, at varying levels of being compliant, are not. I'm glad that the report is out, but I do want to recognize – and I've said this to my colleagues, I've said this to the Auditor General – with respect to the personal care home in my district, that is North Pond personal care home within the Town of Torbay. I'm intimately involved with the ongoing there, I'm there on a regular basis. I have been involved with it in some capacity for the last 15 or 16 years, with family members who have lived there, with close family friends who are there now. As my work as MHA, I visit the home regularly, engage with my constituents and help them in any way I can.

I want to give a shout-out to the administration and the staff there: Lolly, Sandra, Cathy, Bev, Kenny, we have many wonderful staff at the home. That home is indeed that: a home for our friends here in Torbay. They are served well and they are taken care of very well.

Of course, as I said previously, Speaker, the work that the Auditor General did was important, and it had to be done and had to be said. There are people across our province that need care and to be cared for in a better manner. But with respect to North Pond home, I do want to give a shout-out to them. They were upset, no doubt, when the report came out because people didn't know what homes were affected. But I sat with them, with the staff. I met with over 30 of the residents who, since, Speaker, for the benefit of all Members of this House, have written letters to the Auditor General saying how good the care is at North Pond home.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: So I do want to recognize the home as a whole, the administration and the staff and, of course, the level of care that

they do get because, as my colleague from Mount Pearl North said, let's hope we get to become a senior, of course, we'll be there one of these days and the care that's given is care that we want them to give.

So I do want to give a shout-out to them to recognize the level of care that they have there, that they receive on a regular basis. The family members recognize that as well because if there was an issue, I would hear about it, as you would in your district, Speaker, no doubt.

I do want to recognize North Pond in Torbay and just give them a shout-out to keep up the good work and, of course, if an issue does arise, it will be dealt with, no doubt about it, but to recognize that we do have some really good personal care homes throughout the province and, of course, in my district is no different.

Speaker, with respect to my critic role with Housing, I do want to take a couple of minutes to discuss how the budget could have helped Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and, of course, the people of the province affected. Right now, it's approximately 3,000 people on a wait-list, Speaker – 3,000 people on a wait-list or 3,000 families waiting for housing. The vacancy rate, especially here in the metro area at 1.5 per cent, the pickings are slim.

When we look at the level of housing that's needed and what could be done to make more housing available, we'll come back to remediation and to repairs of houses. When we see houses that are damaged, houses that are boarded up and are not repaired in a timely fashion, it gives the opportunity for violence or for destruction, it's truly unfortunate. Houses under NLHC should be repaired in a timely fashion.

I do understand that we have units that are waiting to be repaired and we don't have the staff to do it. There are many vacant positions within that. Now, I haven't had the opportunity to come to Estimates with Housing, I'm looking forward to it, to get into Housing Estimates to see what the questions that have for the department and

the officials, but when you have vacant positions within Housing, we now know why repairs are not being done.

Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak to a retiree from the Marystown area who was with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing for his career. In 2010, he advised that they had approximately 25 or 27 staff, just in the Marystown area alone for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. Today – and I stand to be corrected, the minister can correct me if he wishes – there are two staff to carry out the work.

Now, Speaker, we all know that is totally unacceptable and it's impossible for two people to do the work of 25. When we look at the amount of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units that are left, that are not being lived in, that have the possibility of being repaired and for families to move in to them, I think it's incumbent on this government to put whatever they can into the budget with respect to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing so people have a better place to live.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: If we have difficulty in filling positions, make the positions more attractive. Get the people hired. We cannot blame it on the individuals that are there. They can only handle so much. But I can tell you with respect to the work that needs to be done, if people need to be hired, hire them, and get the work done, get the houses back, remediated, and have families move into them. Because if we got 3,000, Speaker, as far as my numbers are, we have 200 units that are vacant and in need of repairs, and 3,000 low-income families in need of housing.

I think the numbers don't lie, Speaker. They should be much lower. We don't need anyone living on the street or not having accessible, affordable housing. I think with respect to how does this budget come short. Again, it comes short with respect to the housing, and I can't wait to get into Estimates to really get into what we have there.

I've said it before, in any department, it doesn't matter what you're in, you're only as good as those around you. I applaud the staff at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. My constituency assistant Barb, and I, have a great relationship with the individuals that work there. They have a difficult job to do and if they're not supported with respect to housing repair and remediation, it makes their job that much harder. So if we had more people working to get more people back in these housing units, it would be a benefit to many.

Speaker, I do want to give just a shout-out. I had the opportunity last Friday to attend with some of my colleagues here in this hon. House, the RISE Awards; RISE stands for Research Inspired Student Enrichment. There were 20 young students from across our province that were recognized for their achievement. I have to say, my colleague from Baie Verte - Green Bay and I, we were chatting about it, the amount and level of education and commitment that these young people have to their education is astounding.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: It gives you a reality check, Speaker, I can tell you that. It gives you a reality check.

So I do want to recognize from my district a young lady from the Town of Torbay, Sarah Thomas-Mouland, for her engagement and commitment to her studies. I wish her well and, of course, the full 20 students throughout the province who were recognized on that day. I give credit, of course, to the Department of IET for recognizing this.

It certainly gives the young students, our future leaders, a platform, not only to be engaged, but to continue to learn and to bring that learning and commitment back to our province and hope we keep them here in our province as they go forward. They do have the opportunity to go to Boston or to Toronto for several weeks this summer to further their learning and, as I said, let's hope that they do stay in the province with

respect to what they learn and how they become engaged.

Speaker, I do recognize – and I've said it every budget when I've had the opportunity to speak – there are good points in this budget. But as my colleague from CBS said, does it go far enough? Are we including everything that we can include? Does it address the collective needs of the people of the province? When we look at the issue of the increased funding in education, no doubt, it's needed. I believe my colleague from Mount Pearl North said it shouldn't be a dollar figure on the budget line item for K-to-12 education.

I do recognize with respect to the good points there in the budget. However, I'll go back to my original question and my colleague from Harbour Main and I were discussing it earlier. Where's the progress? Where's the progress when it comes to from 2023 to 2025? I do give respect to and thank the people within the Department of Finance for bringing this together.

I say, Speaker, from my district, on behalf of the people of the province, there are much more issues that need to be addressed, that need to be done and I do look forward to having another opportunity to speak to this budget, again, as of course I appreciate your attention, Speaker, and the attention of the Members opposite.

Thanks so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to be able to stand up and represent the District of Ferryland and I thank the people of the district for putting me here. There are lots of issues that I can certainly touch on in the budget and I plan to do so over my two or three chances that I do get to speak, and the first one I'll start on today will be health care.

Certainly, the first thing I'll touch on is wait times. Again, I have been out there a couple of times with my parents. Then after I was out there, I had somebody text me – as I took a picture when I was in the department out in the Health Sciences. While I was there waiting I took a picture and, on the sign, it said if you're presenting complaint is deemed urgent, you will be seen ASAP in the next available space. The current average wait time was five to six hours. That was one. Less urgent, current expected time is 10 to 11 hours. So that was probably three or four weeks ago.

One day last week, I had somebody that was out visiting – not visiting, obviously, they had to go to the emergency room in the Health Sciences and the same picture that I had is fine. He had sent me a picture and this time the average wait time, if it's non-urgent is 14 to 16 hours and urgent wait time went from five to six hours to 10 to 12 hours.

Now, on what day in society did we ever think that that's acceptable to be able to go into an emergency room and wait 10 to 12 hours? How have we been able to accept that as a society? As the Member for Cape St. Francis said, where is the progress? Well, in three weeks it's gone from five to 10 hours to 10 to 12 hours – in three weeks. This has been going on for the last 10 or 12 years. And yes, you can go back 20 years, you go down to emergency and when you waited three or four hours, that was a long time you sat there.

I know after being there one night that when the person inside, the triage nurse, was taking your information and creating a file at about 2:30 in the morning would come out with a file stacked about that high and reading out the names to see if you're still there or you've left. When the pile was finished, it was about that high and they were both about even. So half had left, they were there that long.

Now, that's not acceptable in today's society. Yes, there might be people in there that don't have family doctors and who knows the level of care that they need, but

that's not acceptable to be there 10 or 12 hours and then you decide to leave after seven or eight hours to go home. Now, they will call. There have been people that have said after they left, they will call. But I'd like to know the percentage of how many people left and how many people they called, would be something and interesting to know.

We're looking for progress – we need to get this right. For some reason how we got there, I have no idea, but we need to get this right. We have to go over and visit these areas. We sit here and talk and we talk about a lot of stuff in here, but until you experience going over there – and we can all sit here and try to relate. Then you get all kinds of constituents that will call you with the issue. But when you go over and actually sit there and wait 10 or 12 hours you're saying, how did we get here? How did this happen? When did it become acceptable?

I will use myself as an example. I had to go to a doctor's appointment on March 23 and I had to get blood work done. So I said, well, I'll book an appointment – I can get it done the next day for \$30 or \$25. A senior paying \$25 or \$30, you can go the next day or a walk-in clinic in my district. You can go in the morning at 7 or 7:30, go in and get your blood and you're paying \$25 or \$30.

When did that become acceptable all of a sudden? Where did that come, since COVID? So COVID is over in our minds. Yes, you can still get COVID, but that should go back to regular how it worked before. You could walk in to the Waterford Hospital, you could walk in to the St. Clare's Hospital, you could walk in to the clinic on Major's Path, you take a number, in an hour or two, you had your blood work done and it cost you nothing. You only had to wait.

So I booked the appointment March 23. I said, I'm going to run through the system and I booked the appointment. I did it intentionally. I could go pay the \$30, but I said I'm going to book the system. So I booked the system, I got the appointment, which was Friday past, April 9, I think, was

the date, three weeks nearly waiting to go get blood work.

Now, I didn't feel in any need of urgency to go get it done, so I waited that time. What about people who are sick and they can't afford to go down to the Major's Path clinic to get an appointment and wait three weeks? They have a serious issue going on. They probably go in get some blood work done, who knows what they're checking, but you have to wait three weeks and find out you have an issue. To me, where our society went on that is not acceptable.

Again, we could have a walk-in blood clinic in two or three different spots. I'm just using St. John's as an example; I'm not even talking about out in rural Newfoundland, further out. I mean, up in my area up in Trepassey, yes, they can go get blood work done but, again, there are times that they have to pay for it. There's a nurse or someone that will go around the community and do that or you can go show up at the clinic at certain points in time.

But when did that become acceptable? We could get blood work done any day before COVID hit. Now, all of a sudden, it's acceptable to do that. I don't understand it. I don't understand how the government or the Health department has got to that point. It just doesn't make sense. Don't make any sense to me and we can't get that figured out.

Put that in your budget and get it ironed out and help the people of the province. That's what we need to get done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: I had a letter from a constituent, and I'm going to read a part of it. He said: I'm writing you to express my concerns about the significant delays in hiring nurses in St. John's, despite the well-documented staffing shortages within Eastern Health. While the news is full of reports highlighting the urgent need for health care workers, many qualified nurses who have applied for positions have been

waiting months without even receiving a call back.

So I get up here and I talk about that and the minister says, I can't speak to specific cases. Well, I'm not speaking to a specific case. Yes, I can go make that call, no problem, but where is the problem? How did it get there? Why can't we figure that out?

They're responsible for that department, to be able to recruit nurses and doctors and whatever they're doing, but don't bring up this person's name – which fine, I'm not going to say the person's name, but there's a breakdown in the system of how they're getting back to people.

He said: My daughter is living in Edmonton, would love to relocate back home and has applied for multiple nursing positions posted by Eastern Health; however, she has yet to receive a response from any of them.

Now, is that what we hear on the other side every day? Not a chance. You hear though about the great recruitment and the great numbers. So why isn't this lady getting a call? I shouldn't have to give you her name. If the system is working, she should be called. That's the problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: She is a Newfoundlander, trained in Newfoundland, licensed in Newfoundland, and even a former Eastern Health employee. Despite her qualifications and experience, she cannot seem to get an opportunity to return and contribute to the health care system in our province.

Now that sounds like pretty much interested to me. I can go give her name, but what about the people that are not emailing me and are waiting to fill a position and they're not getting calls? That's the problem we got. So it's a breakdown in the system, and we're here saying about the recruitment and what a great job you do, yes, you probably do. But what about these people? They're falling through the cracks somewhere, that there's something wrong. There's definitely something wrong.

Eastern Health has numerous job postings, some dating back to October 2024. Many of which offer signing bonuses and relocation assistance. However, the slow hiring process seems to contradict the urgency of the reported staffing crisis. Just let me repeat that: However, the slow hiring process seems to contradict the urgency of the reported staffing crisis. So there is an issue, and we have to figure that out.

You sit over there and you read your budget and you get on with nonsense, as far as I am concerned. These are the real issues. These are the issues we should be taking care of.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: These delays not only discourage potential hires, but also prolong the strain on our health care system. We stand here talking about health care every single day and the issues, and that is just one example of many that every MHA in this House gets. I'm sure they do. There's no doubt about it, and that's just one example.

I spoke to a gentleman last week, and it's his daughter. I said, I will certainly bring it up in the House of Assembly. I just showed one of my colleagues and he said, well, that's a letter that everybody is getting and they should be read out in the House of Assembly. There's no need to mention names. I shouldn't have to go over and ask about this person. If the system was working, she'd be here working a year ago. The system is not working. So somebody got to sit down and figure that out and we can certainly help, or all the other MHAs can come in here and help to see what we can do to correct the problem, and the problem, hopefully, will go away.

I'm sure there will be other issues, like any other department, but they're never sat down and discussed – in my opinion, as an MHA, I'm representing my district, the same as you're representing your districts and we have no say other than 22 people who make the rules and how come we can't get this fixed and we've got no say in it. It's a

problem, and I've got a very serious problem with it.

I'll go back to, again – it seems like I have health problems. But I go into have an X-ray, get a slip for an X-ray the same time I got a slip for blood work. I went out and there's a walk-in X-ray. You can walk in any time. I went in and she said it could be an hour and a half or a two-hour delay. In 40 minutes, I was in and out, and it worked great. I didn't have to book an appointment; it worked.

So whatever they're doing in that department, maybe they should have a look at it over in the blood work department because that worked. I'm telling you, I went in there, sat down and I was expecting an hour and a half, two hours; I could live with that. Some people, you know, they may be longer. But I've got to say when I went in, within 40 minutes – I was shocked. I got up, had the X-ray and was gone and there was no more to it. Go back and see your family doctor in three weeks, whenever I get the rest of the stuff done. So that's just me.

I know every MHA in here would get calls – and I only spoke to a lady one day this weekend at a funeral home. Her mom had dementia, and I asked her how she was and how they were doing. The thing is, sometimes as MHAs, we might not have people that have dementia in your family, but if you don't, then it'd be hard to understand. It really would be hard to understand.

I can see it, you get an email, you get a call, and if you don't deal with it, then you don't know. That's the issue – and it's not an issue; you haven't been there. You don't know how it affects the family. How long had it been before they called you? They could be dealing with this a year and a half, two years. Now they've got a breaking point that they have to get help with their mom or dad, to get them in a home – and we've all gone through that. Everybody here has certainly got that call. It's just that sometimes we can relate to it and sometimes we can't.

I spoke to that lady. I knew from my own experience, but she said when you haven't dealt with it, it's hard to experience and it's hard to understand. If you haven't, you've got to remember that those people are dealing with those issues two or three years before they come to you, maybe a year. If it's a wife or a husband and they're dealing with that, that's difficult to deal with.

When they're calling their MHA, they're coming to a breaking point to be able to get that done, and they can't wait another two or three months. They just dealt with this – could be going on two or three years, who knows how long it's going on. They're coming to a breaking point that we should be dealing with a little quicker in that case, in most instances, to try to help them as best we can. Whether it be home care, extra home care for them.

I deal with home care workers and they work 40 hours, they're not allowed to pay them or they won't pay them overtime and you try keep it at a minimum. I can understand that because it's about budget and about money, but sometimes they got to do what they got to do. I'm sure they won't stop it, but there's just something that they have to look at for some of these families. Whether they go to a home, a lock-down unit or wherever that may be.

Everybody's different, and every case – and they can sit there and talk to you all the time about their scenario, and they'll tell you what happened and what Mom said and what Dad said. Sometimes they know them, sometimes they don't, and it's a pretty sad situation. But to have them go through this for longer periods of time because of breakdowns in systems, then we should get this ironed out. We should try to get to the bottom of this. These are problems that if we can iron them out – and I'm sure you can only open so many homes and so many places. We should be able to fix some of these problems and they go away not just for me, they go away for everybody. They're not going to go away, but it makes it better, let's say that. Don't say it's going away. It makes it better for everybody if we can get the system right.

That's the big issue we've got with our Health Department is this system – and I'm not blaming anybody in particular. The Health Department is responsible for it, but we got to be able to fix these problems. We're not looking for more money to fix some of these problems. This is scheduling and time management or whatever that may be. They had a group go over and visit the mental health facility the other day. We should be, as MHAs, not go over and sneak in – I don't know how you get in there, but to see how the Health Sciences emergency department operates.

Should we go over four or five at a time to go and how can we make this better? What can we do to improve it? The wait times – what can we do to improve it? That's what we should be in here solving as MHAs, solving the health problems. Again, we're not asking for more money. We don't know if we're asking for more money. But how do we solve these problems?

You can throw money at that all you like. It's not solving the problem. Obviously, you do whatever you want in the budget. In three weeks, it goes up five or six hours as a wait time. That's not acceptable. It's just not acceptable.

I'll change topic because I spent a fair amount of time and I wasn't planned on spending that much time on that topic but there's so many more areas you can touch on in that department: doctors, nurse practitioners. You know, there's so much more that we can touch on but I'll move on to another topic.

In my area I have a fair amount of – and I certainly do a lot of petitions on roadwork in my area and it's something that I will continue to push for, and I have got some roadwork over the last five or six years. We got it because it was absolutely needed. They didn't give it to us. It was so dreadful that it had to be done.

We have a section of road from St. Shott's now to Peter's River that is just not fit to drive on. The pavement is now 40 years old. Too bad I can't show pictures or hand them

around just to show you the pavement. Like cold patch will not fix that. It will not fix it. You spent more on cold patch in the last six years, you could have it paved. That's how bad it is. There is more cold patch than pavement. There's no question and it's just not acceptable.

I mean, you go up there and you can only take pictures and you can only drive it is the only way you can see it because it's just so bad, cracked up all over the place, pieces gone off the side and strips of it with cold patch. When I go up there, a five-ton truck with a whole load of cold patch going around filling up holes. They fill them up today, rains tonight or if you fill them up in the winter, the ground swells and out it comes or a plow hooks it and it's all gone and you go back and fill it up again.

No different when I came down here today, coming off the Goulds bypass – at what point do the workers that work there or the department say how can we fix this? I saw a car the other day on the Harbour Arterial, what we call it, with two flat tires on the driver's side of the car. When you come off the ramp from the Goulds to go down the Harbour Arterial, there's a pothole there. It's hard to avoid it. You've nearly got to make a letter U to go around it or the way you turn in there, it's hard to avoid it but that car, and I noticed it on Saturday, had two flat tires. The hole is still there this morning.

So if people are working and you're driving by it, come on with the cold patch. It'd be about half the size of that desk and we'd have it done, but it's an issue that somebody lost two tires and maybe a rim if they hit it hard enough.

One time the department had, I'm going to say, the authority to be able to go around, if they see the side of a road washed out or they see something else or a culvert, they had permission to go do it. Their superintendent was there and they go do it. Now they have to call into the Confederation Building to get permission to do anything most times.

I have a culvert – that’s where I started on this; I ran out of time. The culvert down around Brigus when you do down through, it was a round culvert and it’s now squat down, three-quarters full of stone and rock. Obviously, when you get the right flood, it’s coming up over that, out over the road and washing out the road. I’ve got letters on it; I spoke to three or four different ministers. There was an excavator in up the in the district last year that did fix one culvert and did a good job. They sublet it out, that’s fine, but these issues have been going on forever and ever and, again, like I say, how do you fix these problems?

If you fix the culvert, and go do it, you move on and that issue is gone. There will always be something coming up but that goes on and on and on for five or six years. It’s just not acceptable. There’s another culvert going by Long Pond in Bay Bulls – we call it Long Pond – and when you go out there, I don’t know but I’ve said it in a petition, you’re driving along on the right side of the road and it goes down in a dip. So now when you drive out there, if there’s no car coming, you’re going out around it.

The culvert has collapsed. They’ve had cameras out to look at it; it’s rusted out. I tell you, if you get a major flood, the road is going to be shut off going from Bay Bulls and all the Southern Shore right to town unless they go across the new paved Witless Bay Line. That’s where they’ll have to go to go to St. John’s because, at some point, that is going to collapse. I mean, it’s dipped down now, so it definitely needs to be replaced. When are they going to do it? I’ve been after each minister to do that and it has yet to be done, but I’m sure we’ll have some success. I did a petition the other day, and the minister did message back, waiting to hear on brush cutting; again, another big issue in the district.

Brush cutting, right now, like I said, starts in Cape Pond Road and they’re going up to Brigus. They had the machine there for probably four, five or six days. Four days I was up the Southern Shore to go to different communities and you notice it. It’s a good job and it’s great to see, but right when it

starts to get thick, they stopped and took their machine.

Hopefully we get that back there in the not-too-distant future because this is the time of year it needs to be done. This is the time of the year the moose are coming out, and there are other spots. When I put up the petition online – you put up your petition – people said: well, I hope they get to Aquaforte and Fermeuse, which is another big moose area. Not every area in every district needs to be covered but some of these roads in some of these communities, in the guardrails and in certain areas, they need to be done.

You don’t need it in the middle of Ferryland; you don’t need it in the middle of Cape Broyle, but in Cape Broyle on the side roads, I mean, the brush is right to the edges, the alders are right there. They’ve had people up, they sublet out some last year to get some done and they did a great job in the community. The town itself applied for a grant and they did it themselves. It was good. It really worked.

It really did, but I think, looking back – and I haven’t got much time – we could have some small excavators. They rent these for eight and nine months a year. I know the department has; I spoke to previous ministers. If they buy an attachment for them right now, other than in rain, the people in the depots, what are they going to be doing? They should be out with that machine or should be out doing some ditching and doing some small ditching in these communities.

Sorry, I’m out of time. All right, I’ll touch on it when I get a chance.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Any further speakers?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that this House do now adjourn. I will remind the House that we have Estimates at 6 p.m.

SPEAKER: You're just adjourning the debate.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

SPEAKER: So I need a motion to adjourn debate, too.

L. DEMPSTER: I move that we now adjourn debate, and that's seconded by the Minister of Finance.

SPEAKER: The motion is this House do stand adjourned.

However, as the Government House Leader identified, we do have Estimates for Social Services Committee at 6 p.m. to debate the Estimates of Health and Community Services; and 9 a.m. tomorrow morning, the Government Services Committee will be debating the Estimates of Finance, Consolidated Fund Services and Public Service Commission.

All those in favour of adjournment, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m., tomorrow.

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