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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit visitors.

Before we begin, I'd like to recognize, in our public gallery, the members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Rangers from the Western region.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Bonavista, Conception Bay South, Placentia West - Bellevue, Ferryland and Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

As a recipient of the King Charles III Coronation Medal, Fred Cuff of Elliston has admirably dedicated a lifetime of service to the residents of the District of Bonavista. As a journeyman and master electrician, executive assistant to two MPs and Chief of Staff to the Minister of Fisheries –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: – Fred's community achievements further validates his outstanding service.

Mr. Cuff was CO, Commanding Officer, of the RCSCC Matthew of Bonavista when it received the top corps in Canada in 1988 and awarded the Navy League National President's Award – the Navy League of Canada's highest award.

He was past president and founding member of Bruce Denniston Bone Marrow Society in Newfoundland and Labrador Society; past member of the mental health steering committee on our peninsula; served on the board of trustees of the

peninsula health care complex; founding member and chair of the peninsula emergency response committee; served on the Elliston Town Council; past vice-president of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 7, et cetera. His involvement led him being awarded the Canada 125th Medal by the Governor General of Canada in 1992 in recognition of contribution to community and country.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating the outstanding service contributions of Fred Cuff for exemplary community service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge two remarkable ladies from Conception Bay South who have recently launched a children's book titled *Tilly the Too-Tall Clover*.

Ida Linehan Young is a local author with numerous awards for her eight published books from 2014 to 2024, which cover a range of fiction, historical fiction and now, children's literature. You can explore her books on her website, www.idalinehanyoung.ca, and, of course, social media.

Emma Dooley, an illustrator and art event host since 2016, has facilitated over 1,500 events and creates art suitable for all skill levels. Her work can be viewed on her website, www.emmadooleyart.com, and, of course, social media.

Today, Ida and Emma collaborated on their new project, a children's book named *Tilly the Too-Tall Clover*. The book features Ida's writing and Emma's illustrations. Both are thrilled about this venture as it marks Ida's first children's book and Emma's first published book. The story of Tilly revolves around a clover who faces bullying for being different. However, her unique traits

ultimately come to define her and pave the way for a new happy life.

Congratulations to Ida Linehan Young and Emma Dooley on this exciting launch. I am confident that this book will bring them great success.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I rise in this hon. House to acknowledge all the young athletes in our beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue. During Easter break, there will be provincial minor hockey tournaments taking place for various groups from U11, U13, U15 and U18. I want to recognize all the hard work and dedication put in by the thousands of volunteers who make these tournaments happen. Each player is not only an ambassador of their hockey club, but their community.

The game allows them to develop their hockey skills, teamwork, social skills and sportsmanship in a structured and supportive environment. The game of hockey is so rewarding and open to all. It's important that we continue to support and promote hockey for all ages so they continue to have the opportunity to play and compete amongst their peers. To the players, I would like to say: Play with heart, stay focused and give it your all.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in wishing not only athletes in my district, but all our province's minor hockey players and wish them good luck at their provincials while having fun, making friendships and making memories.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Stephen Walsh from Petty Harbour, who now resides in Goulds. Stephen has been bowling for five decades and is a fierce competitor.

Stephen has made numerous appearances on the national stage. He represented Newfoundland and Labrador as a singles competitor, once, at the Canadian 5 Pin Bowlers' Association Open and, twice, at the MBAC Nationals as tournament men's single and, most recently, as the senior single. He also appeared on seven teams carrying the Newfoundland and Labrador flag: Four men's teams appearances at the Canadian 5 Pin Bowlers' Association Open National Championships, two tournament men's teams and one senior team at the MBAC Nationals. Accompanying a variety of local success and accomplishments, in 2000, Stephen achieved perfect throwing, a 450 game. In 2005, he also added a CBC Champion to his résumé.

Bowling is in Stephen's blood. With his induction, he will join his father in the Hall of Fame. His wife has seen much success in her career as well and they have passed the torch to their children – a continued Walsh legacy and one that will surely continue for decades to come.

Please join me in congratulating Stephen Walsh on being inducted into the Newfoundland and Labrador 5 Pin Bowlers' Association Hall of Fame in the bowler category.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, today I rise to honour Raymond Oake. On February 18, 2025, I had the pleasure to present Ray with the 75th Anniversary of Confederation Medallion while celebrating his 85th birthday.

Ray was born in the town of Fogo and married Jean Hart. They had two children and raised their family on the island. Ray held the position of CEO for the Fogo Island Cottage Hospital from 1968 to 1996.

To quote American author, Elizabeth Andrew, "Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."

This speaks to Ray and what he's done for most of his life – actively volunteering and giving up his time in many different areas. Ray was an Anglican lay reader for 40 years, a chartered member with the Brimstone Head Lions Club for 46 years, justice of peace and was a former mayor of the town of Fogo. Ray has been dedicated volunteer community leader for his whole adult life, and this presentation is well-deserved recognition for a lifetime of service to the island and its people.

Congratulations, Ray, and thank you for your years of service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

A. PARSONS: Speaker, last week I was honoured to host the 2025 Research Inspired Student Enrichment Awards, the RISE Awards.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: Twenty of our brightest Level II high school students were recognized for academic excellence in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Our department invests approximately \$320,000 to enable highly motivated, eager minds to attend one of three enrichment programs: the Research Science Institute located at MIT, the Boston Leadership Institute located in Wellesley, Massachusetts, and the Davinci Engineering Enrichment Program located at the University of Toronto.

This year's recipients are: Kate Blanchard, Valmont Academy; Jack Hanlon, Lakewood Academy; Sydney Hartle, Gander Collegiate; Lily Hefford, Crescent Collegiate; Ava Hodder, Pasadena Academy; Abigail Janes, Holy Heart of Mary; Noshin Khan, Waterford Valley High; Samuel Lane, Mealy Mountain Collegiate; William Lane, Mount Pearl Senior High; Aivin Siby Nilakkapallil, White Hills Academy; Grace Noseworthy, St. Bonaventure's College; Alpita Patro, Gonzaga High School; Emma Rogers, Random Island Academy; Katherine Rumbolt, Holy Heart of Mary; Anastasia Saika-Voivod, Gonzaga High School; Sahil Singh, Gonzaga Regional High; Keagan Smith, St. Bonaventure's College; Sarah Thomas-Mouland, Holy Heart of Mary; Paige Whittle, Waterford Valley High; and, finally, Sophia Zhang, Holy Heart of Mary High School.

Speaker, we are incredibly proud of these students and we wish them continued success as they pursue their education and career goals.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker, and I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Speaker, I had the opportunity to attend this event last week with several of my colleagues, and on behalf of the Official Opposition, we extend our congratulations to the 20 recipients of the RISE Awards. We wholeheartedly support this initiative.

These students represent just some of the countless bright youth throughout our province. We are reminded each and every day that our province's future will undoubtedly be in great hands for generations to come.

We wish them all the best as they continue their education, and in all their future endeavours.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

We, too, would like to congratulate all the students who received the RISE Award. It's indeed a great achievement and we wish them every success.

We also call on government, please, to ensure schools have the appropriate resources to address class composition and class size so that all students have an enriching environment and have the ability to grow and thrive in school.

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, we're hearing from volunteer fire departments all across Newfoundland and Labrador that they're now regularly

responding to 911 medical calls. We've been told that these volunteers receive no funding for supplies, time or resources.

I ask the minister: Are volunteer firefighters now the first responders in the new provincial ambulance program and will they be funded?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for the question.

Certainly the integration of the road ambulance service has been an incredible success story throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. I can tell you having seen it and having gone on ride-alongs on the ambulance, finally now, the health authority and officials know where the assets are distributed throughout the province so that in a modern way they can distribute those resources, where they're best needed throughout the province.

I can tell you on this side of the House, there's incredible value and we value the volunteers who are in those firefighting roles, Mr. Speaker, throughout the province. They play an incredible role not only to their communities, but to the overall system. We've been there to support them. We'll continue to be there to support them into the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I didn't hear an answer to whether or not they will actually be funded in this fiscal year, and we recognize volunteer firefighters continue to have incredible dedication.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: They are the ones who often risk their own lives to save others.

Now we're hearing from communities, though, that their volunteer fire departments

are experiencing a significant increase in the number of medical calls that they respond to. In some cases, going from a few dozen calls a year to now 40 or 50 in a few months. Again, these are volunteer departments.

I ask again: Who's footing the bill?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly the Member opposite is correct, these people, not to understate it, but to celebrate it, are heroes, Mr. Speaker. They run into places of danger when all the rest of us would be running out. I come from a family of firefighters. My wife's family is full of firefighters. Her father was a firefighter. Her uncles were both firefighters. It is a true calling, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to support them. The volunteer firefighters, the professional firefighters, the first responders, we will continue to be there to support them and if there are gaps, we will ensure that we address those gaps going forward to make sure that they have the critical resources that they need.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, the volunteer fire departments are telling us that they're maxed out with no sustainable funding for equipment, operations or the medical calls they're now expected to handle. We've heard cases where the cost of just the supplies that they're using in response and they have no source of funding other than go out and fundraise to replace this necessary equipment. So every call means more cost for small towns that are already stretched thin.

So again, I ask: The volunteer fire departments are making sure that the patients are looked after; who's looking after them?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite is aware, we are trying to look after them as well, Mr. Speaker. The Member opposite was here for the budget. Presumably he's read the budget. There's an additional \$4 million for volunteer firefighters across the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: That's in addition to the support we provide with things like grants for new fire trucks, new pieces of infrastructure, modernizing the breathing apparatus instruments, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to be there, should there be subsequent gaps.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we're aware of the additional money that's been put in the budget for fire departments and it is welcome, but what I'm particularly asking about is money to cover off the cost that they incur when they're doing medical responses. Those are the things that we're talking about and hearing.

Speaker, last Friday, a staff member at a local business in CBS experienced a medical emergency and 911 was called. It took an hour for paramedics to respond.

I ask the minister: Is that acceptable?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The triage of calls is done through provincial medical control and the response times are sometimes a challenge. One of the comments from the previous question was around volunteer fire departments and they have been integrated now into the 911

system as we move towards an integrated first response for accidents and emergencies of all kinds.

Certainly if the Member opposite has some details, I would be happy to look into the specifics of that and supply him with some answers to his questions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I would suggest that and if they've already been integrated into the road ambulance system, then they already should be compensated for being part of that integration. They shouldn't have to wait any longer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, waiting over an hour for a medical emergency is not acceptable. Minutes matter and lives are at stake, and I am sure the minister is well aware of that. I'm also aware of another 911 call last Friday that happened to have a medical emergency at a volleyball tournament when the caller called 911 and was transferred and ultimately put on hold for five minutes.

Speaker, does that mean our ambulance system is working? How many more people in our province have waited over an hour for an ambulance response?

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.

Speaker, 911 is obviously a very, very important service that we provide in this province. They are essentially taking the calls and then fielding them out to either ambulance, police or fire. That is done; they're not left off the phone at any point until they're picked up on the other side by either ambulance, fire or police. That's the process that we go through.

If the Member has a specific example that he would like to provide me I'll get that checked, because all those calls are recorded.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, there are examples all over Newfoundland and Labrador of people who have waited well over an hour for an ambulance response. If the system isn't working, it's time to make sure that it gets fixed. In this particular instance, that particular individual was put on hold and certainly it needs to be addressed or found out why it happened.

Speaker, Clarenville, Carbonear, Burin all regularly have no internal medicine doctors to admit patients, therefore patients are waiting days in emergency rooms waiting for a transfer to a facility to be admitted. The problem is because they are in hospital, the provincial ambulance service considers them to be a routine transfer and not a priority.

I ask: Is this exactly what is going on in our system and does it make any sense?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

Inter-facility transfers are organized physician to physician. That is done on the basis of clinical need and clinical priority. Nobody else makes those decisions. Nobody else has a role in that except the physicians concerned. So if someone waits longer than somebody else, there is a medical reason for that.

In terms of the actual mechanics of that, there are at least two mechanisms by which, if not three, an individual would then be transferred. The decision to move and when to prioritize them is medical. How to do it is then operationalized by a medical

control centre using either ground or air, elective or emergency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, last night during Estimates the Acting Minister of Mental Health and Addictions confirmed that there are no new community beds, which was a key recommendation of the *Towards Recovery* report to allow people to seek treatment and care closer to the family supports of home.

Why has government cancelled this?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm not sure where the Member opposite got that from the comments at Estimates last night. Not that I heard anyway. There are community beds for those patients who require them. There are also what we call now supportive living arrangements and transitional beds. So it may be simply a question of language.

The whole plan around *Towards Recovery* was predicated on expanding community services and funding them to a level where they could support care at home, hospital at home and not rely on institutionalization which had been the bane of mental health care for decades, if not centuries, and it's well consigned to the history of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I was on that Committee and I was one of the most vocal people about stigmas

because I have a background in mental health. It's something that's near and dear to me and I've always spoke about it in this House and will continue to speak about it.

Speaker, community care homes, supportive housing and independent living arrangements, they've been around for decades. It's not a new thing. These are places to live, not what the report envisioned. That's not what it envisioned. The minister agreed with me on this last night.

Let me quote the minister from a press release on August 23, 2019, announcing an RFP for a new hospital: "... mental health crisis beds in all regions, as well as new community-based programs and services We must ensure people can get the services they need when and where they need them."

Speaker, I could not agree more. Why did the minister change his mind?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

There are mental health beds across this province. To imply that it's simply the new adult mental health facility that is a source of mental health beds is inaccurate. There are 24 in Central, 20 in Western and there are beds in Labrador. There are community beds. They are not necessarily identified as health care facilities. There are wraparound teams. We have two ACTT teams and 13 FACT teams across the province, which we did not have four years ago prior to the advent of *Towards Recovery*.

In addition to that, we have mobile crisis response teams. We have over 80 Doorways walk-in clinics. I could go on, but I see you're telling me my time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm referring to the beds that was announced in the report that's supposed to be keeping people closer to their communities. I'm not getting down in every weed of the report. I'm talking about an issue, but the minister alludes and moves off topic.

Speaker, let me quote the *Towards Recovery* report: "Replace Waterford Hospital with in-patient services closer to home." That's the point. "These inpatient and community services should be identified in a plan within the first year of this report's release," which was in 2017.

Speaker, why is the minister deliberately ignoring this key recommendation?

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

J. HAGGIE: It depends on where you live whether it's closer to home. If you live in Gander, then beds in Central are closer to home. There are 24 of them. If you live in Corner Brook, 24 beds there is closer to home. If you have community services, the regional mental health care team in Central for example, the FACT teams that each look after around 20 to 30 individuals with high needs, those are situated in the community, outside of the mental health facility.

Mental health care should be as close to home as possible. That's where it's gone, and the Member seems not to be able to grasp that despite my explanation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Oh yes, I grasp it, Speaker. It's semantics. It's not what we're asking. He knows what we're asking. Since 2017, what new beds have been put in those communities? And he's come back over 20, 30, 40 years back. That's not what we're asking. We're asking since 2017.

Speaker, I'll be able to table the press release if the minister can't remember. And let me read from another press release on the new hospital dated July 28, 2020. "Expanded community-based services for those wishing to receive support closer to home."

Speaker, can the Acting Minister of Mental Health and Addictions or the Acting Minister of Health and Community Services list those services and what communities they are based in?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I can't list off 80 communities in 45 seconds, that would just be unintelligible. The facts of the case are these are beds in the community. These are beds in community facilities. These are beds on Edinburgh street in Gander, on Brochen, on Airport Boulevard, and I use those as examples because that's one community that I live in, and that I know.

Those are people with mental health care needs, with addictions needs who are being looked after at home – at home. Not close to home, at home. So I don't know really where the Member is getting his facts from. It's contrary to the experience of people in the health care system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: I'm reading the report. I don't know the last time the minister read it. And we're talking to people. These supports are not there. Independent living arrangements and supports have been around for 50 years, longer.

Speaker, what is the point of the new hospital in St. John's, it's bricks and mortar, when we are desperately trying to get people help in their own communities? How

is this new building going to help residents in Labrador and the Great Northern Peninsula?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much.

It's called a hub-and-spoke model, which is also referenced in the report, which has not yet been quoted. I look forward to hearing that in a bit.

Essentially, those resources are disseminated across the province. We have supports in communities. We have 13 ACT Teams – Assertive Community Treatment Teams. These are scattered across the province; they're not concentrated in St. John's.

They gain their expertise, their updating and their continued professional development by a relationship with the tertiary care centre. It's called clinical practice. It's what we did for 35 or maybe 40 years, and that's how clinical practice works. These are in the community where the people need them and they relate to a centre of excellence.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, the acting chairperson and CEO of the Public Service Commission, a failed former Liberal candidate, has remained in an acting role for seven years. Two years ago during Estimates –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PADDOCK: – it sounded like a permanent position was imminent.

This morning during –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I can't here the question.

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

L. PADDOCK: This morning during Estimates, still no change.

Speaker, I ask: Why is this Liberal Party insider still in an acting position after seven years?

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

S. COADY: Speaker, I know his mother would be ashamed of him. This is ridiculous (inaudible) a 30-year civil servant that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: A 30-year civil servant who has given mightily to this province, who has been at the public service for seven years.

I can say the Leader of the Opposition certainly spoke highly of this individual over the last number of years as he sat before him in Estimates. I wish the Member opposite would do the same. This is a strong commissioner of the Public Service of Newfoundland and Labrador who does incredible work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, I agree, it is ridiculous that they're not following –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PADDOCK: – the public service process.

So let's switch tack. Speaker, the Liberals –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask all Members, the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay has the floor.

L. PADDOCK: Thank you, Speaker.

We'll shift tack here a bit. Speaker, the Liberals had a chance in *Budget 2025* to scrap the punishing sugar tax but they didn't.

Can the Minister of Finance explain why?

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

S. COADY: First, Speaker, I will refer to the preamble and to what the Member opposite just said. I think it's embarrassing and shameful for the Opposition to question the character of a person who gave 30 years to the civil service of Newfoundland and Labrador, who has served as commissioner of the public service and who's been questioned by the Opposition in Estimates over the past, well, six budgets because that's how long I know he's been before them and to raise a question of his character and his capability in this House is shameful.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Allow me to say, I wonder if the Member opposite would say the same question about tobacco tax that he's raising about sugar tax?

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The level of conversation is getting a bit loud, I can't hear the questions or the responses.

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

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, I was never questioning the Member's integrity. What I was questioning and what I will continue to question is process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PADDOCK: Follow the process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Now, let's go back to the question I did ask. The Liberals had a chance in *Budget 2025* to scrap the punishing sugar tax, but they didn't.

Can the Minister of Finance explain why?

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

S. COADY: When you raise on the floor of this House of Assembly, question the commissioner of the public service, you certainly question whether or not he should be there and that's shameful.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: That is shameful, Speaker.

Now, on to the sugar-sweetened beverage tax. As the Member opposite well knows there are a multitude of very learned – the Diabetes Association, the Cancer association, the Paediatric association, the World Health association say this is the right thing to do if you want to lessen the amount of sugar in people's diets.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: Just as with tobacco tax, we raise tax on tobacco. Is the Member opposite suggesting that we lower tax on tobacco as well?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, there was nothing sweet about the minister's response on the sugar tax.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, families are drowning in bills, food prices are up and the Liberals still think the answer is more taxes.

Will the minister stand up today and commit to amending the budget and finally scrap this wasteful, regressive and punishing tax?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Seven hundred and fifty million dollars we put back in the people's pockets. Do you know what the Opposition done? They have caused this government to pay hundreds of millions of dollars a year to overcome the burden of Muskrat Falls – shame.

You talk about shame, Speaker. Hundreds of millions of dollars that we could be spending, but we have to mitigate rates because of what the Progressive Conservatives did in building Muskrat Falls. It's their legacy. It is absolutely their legacy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister is standing right in front of me. I can barely hear her speak. Can the Members keep the noise down?

It's on both sides of the House. All Members on both sides of the House, please, keep the level of conversation down a bit.

SPEAKER: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, you have 12 more seconds.

S. COADY: Allow me to say that I know that we're supporting seniors, we're supporting health care, we're supporting children, we're supporting families in this budget and I know one thing. The Opposition, the Progressive Conservatives, have voted against it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Speaker, it has been four years since we had two fatalities in Grand Falls-Windsor on our divided highway. Ever since then, there have been near misses. Ten days ago, there was a near miss. This weekend, there was a near miss. It's happening on a weekly basis now, Minister. Somebody else is going to die.

I ask the minister – you've had this now for months. Your department, your government has had it for four years. Minister, what specifically has been done and assessed to address this problem, please?

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

As he knows, I've been texting back and forth with him multiple times in recent days and I have told him that our department has reviewed the situation and now that the weather has changed, we are planning to make some adjustments in that area of the Trans-Canada Highway because safety is paramount at Transportation and Infrastructure.

We have agreed that there are changes that are necessary and we will be implementing them as soon as possible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Minister.

My wife and my kids travel it every day. My constituents' families travel it every day. They're waiting to know, today, specifically, what changes is your department going to implement so I can assure them today that it's coming, Sir?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite again.

As I've mentioned in text to him, and I will tell the other Members of the House of Assembly, there is going to be signage changes. There are clearly signs there that show you have to go to a certain side of the divided highway. Not everybody sees that; we've recognized that. There will be signs that will be moved to indicate you have to stay right or stay left if you're coming in the opposite direction.

Those signs will be changing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, in 2020, the Premier directed the minister, through his mandate letter, to establish an advocate for persons with disabilities. The Premier is about to resign and this commitment is unfulfilled.

I ask the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development: Will you do the right thing and table legislation creating a

disability advocate before the House closes this spring?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker.

There are community organizations and groups which play an important role in disability advocacy for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. My staff and I have had ongoing engagement with many of these organizations and we welcome the opportunity to discuss issues that are important to persons with disabilities. The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board provides advice and recommendations to the department regarding the accessibility standards and other policies and practices of government that we can improve.

There are a number of things that we're doing, Mr. Speaker, in communities to support persons with disabilities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, on March 11, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services gave a formal presentation to pediatric staff on a plan – not a discussion starter – to integrate adult gynecology into the Janeway with no prior consultation with doctors nor consideration to the impact on services. Frustrated doctors were scolded for contacting politicians and the media. Now the Minister of Health accuses some of the doctors of being a little defensive.

So I have to ask the minister: Who is really being defensive, pediatricians or the minister and the CEO of Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Before we answer the substance of the question, let me use this opportunity to state, again, something which has not been quoted in the media, although I said it six times: There is no intention to diminish or reduce services to children in this province at the Janeway Hospital.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: Having said that, my understanding is that NLHS made a presentation as the initial phase of a discussion about one option to deal with the fact that at one end of the corridor, you have 110 per cent occupancy and, at the other end, you have an empty floor. No patients, no beds, an empty floor and this was part and parcel of that discussion.

The consultations have started and will continue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Obviously, the minister is saying doctors imagined what they heard.

Both the minister and the CEO of Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services have gone out of their way to say children's health services will not be affected, yet they're already experiencing impacts.

According to the report: 15 patients were delayed transfers out of the PICU due to a lack of beds; three critically ill children were transferred out of the province; 24 sleep studies were cancelled; perinatal clinic space has been lost due to adult pre-op assessments; pediatric teaching and meeting rooms have been lost to adult cardiology; sharing of the Janeway OR, MRI and CT scanner with adult services; and, to add insult to injury, the Janeway parking

garage has become the new freezer storage facility for unclaimed bodies.

I ask the minister: Will he table the presentation and the data NLHS used in developing this plan?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

We are at the start of a process. There is no plan because the consultations are not yet complete. Part of this exploration began the other week with the discussion between Dr. Parfrey, Dr. Brown and the interested parties at the Janeway and in obstetrics and in gynecology. Part of that, my understanding is, a trip to sightsee at facilities where there are combined women's health and children's hospital.

So there is no plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

The minister has gone on to compliment the CEO of NL Health Services for his diligence and nerve in addressing the alleged 40 per cent bed vacancy rate at the Janeway and the lack of space at the Health Sciences.

I'm not convinced about the diligence or nerve ensuring that failing to take the concerns of pediatricians seriously, we risk compromising the health care of our children.

I ask the minister what he plans to do to ensure that the professional concerns in the *Preserve. Protect. Prioritize.* document do not turn into an Auditor General's report on the deficiencies in children's health care?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I mean, the numbers are what the numbers are. I think having a CEO that is prepared to look at those numbers – and he went to some lengths last night at Estimates, for the benefit of the Member, to explain some of the demographics and population changes behind it.

The facts of the case are that there is, as yet, no plan. This is all up for discussion and the issues around resource utilization need to be addressed to make sure that we use those resources to the best benefit for the children and the adults of this province.

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 two.

In accordance with subsection 18(9) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I'm advising the House that Members of the Management Commission are: the Speaker, the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader, the Acting Minister of Health and Community Services and Deputy Government House Leader, the Member for Bonavista, the Member for Waterford Valley, the Member for St. John's Centre and the Clerk.

Secondly, I am tabling the May 27, 2024, Baie Verte - Green Bay By-Election Report on Election Finances.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: 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 Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The spring repairing of destructive potholes in the roads within the District of Bonavista has taken months to complete. Thousands of residents and tourists travel these roads frequently and many have had their cars damaged. Not great for the residents in the district, nor the school buses carrying their children, nor for our economic development with bad roads serving as a deterrent to tourists. The late Jim Brown, of J-1 Contracting, stated that he could repair every pothole within the District of Bonavista in two weeks.

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 establish a goal of having every pothole within the District of Bonavista filled with hot asphalt within a six-week period and prior to the end of June.

Not that long ago, I presented a petition in this House which talked about a screen in Amherst Cove – the lower part of the district at which large rocks and clumps of ice and salt were being put into the trucks and spread on the roads, leading to a whole lot of cracked windshields. The residents of the District of Bonavista got a right to be concerned, not only for the windshields, but also for the tires and for the vehicles of which cost that they have to endure.

We have a Discovery Geopark in our district. Many points in our district and when the assessors for the UNESCO Discovery

Geopark came down, they stayed and commented, in the report, on the lack of maintenance on our roads of which these attributes were being available to tourists.

Whether you enter our district on Route 233 from Port Blandford or that you come down 230, either one will have damaging potholes that would be evident. I mentioned the Discovery Geopark. If you went out to Keels, Tickle Cove to see the sea arch, those roads are terrible. If you went on Route 239 to see Random Passage, a main thoroughfare, off Route 230, terrible. If you went to Spillars Cove to see the chimney, the geological feature, terrible.

All we ask is that within a six-week period that the roads would have hot asphalt, safer for the travelling public.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

In 2016, government cut the number of home care hours for seniors and increased their contribution they would have to pay to obtain and maintain home care workers.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase the amount of hours for seniors' care at the previous low rate so as to ensure seniors can remain in their homes for longer periods of time.

Speaker, I put this petition before the House of Assembly a number of times and I'll do it again because I'm still hearing a lot of concerns from the seniors in my district. Not only now with regard to the hours that they get, but they can't even get someone to work with them in their own homes. Their assessments are not being done. Reassessments are slow. By the time they get that done and get the home care hours for them to stay in their own homes, it's

being difficult and challenging for them to even stay in their own homes. We have to do better than that. We have to do better.

I think that the government, in their Health Accord, said care to community to keep people in their own homes. How are we going to implement a plan of care to community when we can't get the assessments done, we can't get people to work – and the CEO of NL Health Services has said that the workers are not paid enough anyway, the home care workers.

So those examples have to be adjusted. Home care hours have to be adjusted, assessments that need to be done, and we need to get more help for seniors to keep them in their own homes to address those problems.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition regards Livingstone Street Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation units. These are the reasons for the petition:

Delayed renovations and repairs to NLHC housing units on Livingstone Street have resulted in units being in a state of disrepair and vacant for months. An increasing number of unhoused people use the vacant building as a shelter.

The March 27, 2025, fire at 77-79 Livingstone Street and the fire at 112 Livingstone Street on December 25, 2024, started in vacant units.

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation has failed to invest necessary funding to hire the human resources to maintain the houses and make them available to people. The result is a neighbourhood that fears for its safety and is demoralized by the number of vacant and

burnt-out buildings. Residents feel Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation has become a slum landlord rather than a housing provider of choice.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately develop a plan and timeline to have all vacant NLHC units on Livingstone Street and in the neighbouring streets repaired and ready for occupancy within a year and develop a plan to complete renovations and maintenance on all NLHC units within 18 months; and to invest the necessary funding and hire the necessary workers to complete the renovations within the above timelines and work with other government and non-government agencies and organizations to support people who live there remain safely housed.

I'll say that, in many ways, Livingstone Street is emblematic of a lot of the other concerns in housing. We've seen a decrease in the budget for Newfoundland housing at a time we need to see more investment. Since I was first elected, I watched the steady decline of the houses there, and I'm not just talking about the fact that boarded up windows remain boarded up for months at a time and almost a year, but the fact that the maintenance – the rotting clapboard, the retaining walls and so on and so forth and the facing are rotting out and have not been replaced.

I spoke to one tenant who could hear people coming into the vacant unit next door and was afraid that a fire could start. This petition is signed by the residents of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units. They want something done.

We've asked for a community centre there – not just me, but other people within the community. A fire broke out, Speaker, at 106-108 Livingstone Street back in October of 2023. A year later, despite requests that it be turned over to be used as a community centre, it was sold to a private developer. What we do not want to see now – certainly what I do not want to see, Speaker – is that

this unit be sold to a private developer when it needs more deeply affordable housing.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: A response by the Acting Minister of Housing.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

We have to address this petition. I think it's certainly very disappointing that anyone refers to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing in that way. There are hundreds of dedicated public servants that work for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing who get up every day and work extremely hard to maintain the properties and make sure that some of our most vulnerable tenants in Newfoundland and Labrador have a safe and comfortable place to live.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Newfoundland and Labrador Housing supports over 5,500 units across the province, with 12,000 tenants in those units. In maintaining those units, they accomplished 14,000 work orders a year. So that could be anything from a cupboard coming off, it could be a fire or it could be a broken window. I know as MHAs, I'm sure you all have many examples where your constituents engage with you sometimes on work orders that have been put in for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, and those staff work very diligently to fix those issues, Speaker.

I will say that our government has maintained an extra \$8 million in the budget to go towards maintaining the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units. I know people talked about the vacancy, and I want to clarify for anyone who's watching, when we talk about the vacancy within Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, that is really the time between when someone moves out of a place, a unit, and that work is evaluated, work is completed, it's ready to move in, someone's offered that position, they accept or deny it, and then they move on.

So, Speaker, I could talk about this all day –

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

Speaker, I've done this petition a number of times as well. Most petitions I have done are mostly roads and infrastructure in my district. This road serves various tourist attractions in the area of the Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove community. It has Chafe's Landing, Tinkers Ice Cream Shop, Petty Harbour Mini Aquarium, East Coast Trail, Fishing For Success, North Atlantic Ziplines and many other features in the area as well.

It serves as a vibrant fishing community. People come from away, they drive in here and they look to go to a rural area, they jump in a car and they go down to Petty Harbour, 15 minutes away from St. John's, and they're in rural Newfoundland as it looks out in the rural areas – a fishing community with lots of boats and lots of activity on the wharf.

Right now, this time of the year, the crab will be coming in down there so this road is used by crab trucks. They're picking up their crab and bringing or transporting it to wherever, or they could be processing it in Petty Harbour as well. But it's known by many, I would say and I've said this before, this area is more travelled than anywhere in Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to tourism. It's just not recorded or tracked. People drive through, you go down there in the summer and there's not a spot to park. That's how busy it is.

This road, when it comes up in the roadwork when the minister came out, it says "Paving section." I'd like to know what section they're paving and what the work is completed. We already called his office to see what roadwork they're doing and I'd love for the minister to be able to come back and respond to me where they're starting, where it's finishing and how much is getting done.

Thank you, Speaker.

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 1, budget debate.

SPEAKER: We are now going to debate the main budget motion.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

First of all, I'd like to say it's an honour to speak on *Budget 2025* and to stand here and represent the people of the District of Harbour Main. I want to say, as well with respect to *Budget 2025*, there remain many

issues that are of extreme concern for the people that I represent in the District of Harbour Main. I'm going to speak about a couple of those issues for the next 20 minutes, and I'm going to start with health care.

Speaker, one has to ask when we look at the current budget, *Budget 2025*, and I think this is the question that I will start with and the question that I will end with: Is our health care system any better today, 10 years after this Liberal government came into power? I ask that question because I've heard many stories throughout the district of terrible, horrible experiences that constituents and people have gone through. We have to ask ourselves, is this what our health care system has come to?

I'm going to talk about a couple of examples. One of the examples that I have to cite is an example that occurred approximately a month ago and it happened at the Health Sciences Centre. It's probably one of the most difficult calls that I received as the Member of the House of Assembly for Harbour Main District. It was a very sad and disturbing story. It was about a senior, he was 85 years old, and what he experienced while waiting in the emergency department to be seen, to access health care.

This man felt abandoned because he was actually on a stretcher for approximately three nights and four days waiting to be seen, Speaker. I heard from his family, in particular his daughters, who were basically aghast that this was happening to their loved one – their beloved father. They talked about the impact this had on their father, how he was depressed, how he was crying and how confused and scared he was in this position in the hospital. He, basically, was in a state of despair.

We're seeing our seniors experiencing these kinds of events at our emergency departments. We were told when we inquired from our office that there was no available beds, or that was the likely opinion that was given by the health official. So we got involved and, I'm happy to say, the next

day they were able to find a bed for him; but, once again, this is unacceptable. We have normalized this kind of behaviour. Our standards have come to a level that, really, it has become normal.

I heard from another constituent in regard to this experience. He also offered experiences that his father had had in an emergency department and his belief was – I'll quote what he said – my father and many more experienced neglect and agism that contributed to the complications that eventually caused his death. We're talking about an individual, a senior, a father who, basically, according to his son, was involved in these experiences that eventually, in his son's opinion, caused his death. The son further stated that this has become the norm and it's just not acceptable. How have we come to the point where we have allowed this to become the standard that we're accepting?

Speaker, we know when we look at health care in our province, accessing health care is very difficult, and, yes, we know that there's approximately 163,000 residents in our province without a family doctor. When people look at the state of our health care and the fact that this is not acceptable, we can never allow this to become the norm and this has to change, these are horrible times in our health care system.

I had the opportunity to listen to my colleagues, the MHAs, yesterday who were speaking about their experiences, so I'm not the only one in the District of Harbour Main. This is happening throughout our districts everywhere in our province.

When I look at, for example, the Member for Exploits, he talked about the difficulties that his constituents are having accessing health care. He pointed out the fact that the emergency unit, the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre, had been cut – that was cut back in, I believe, 2016 – and the disappointment his constituents would feel when they see again, in *Budget 2025*, that this has not been addressed. These individuals, these people and constituents, have to travel so far to access proper health

care. They do not have that in their reach and this is really what we're talking about, a rural issue.

This is about health in rural Newfoundland and accessing health. When I look at Carbonear hospital, for example, I've been hearing from patients in the District of Harbour Main, and these are other patients outside in the neighbouring areas of Carbonear hospital. We're hearing that people are spending up to 17 hours waiting in the emergency department to receive care. I mean, how has that become the norm? How has that become acceptable to us? It cannot be. We cannot allow this to continue.

We know that the Member for Ferryland mentioned, as well, some of the numbers. I think he talked about the fact that the wait times at the Health Sciences Centre for urgent matters, urgent cases, went to 10 and 12 hours, and less urgent, 14 to 16 hours. So this is happening throughout our province, Speaker. It's not just in St. John's. It is happening, as well, in rural Newfoundland and, again, this cannot be accepted as our norm.

I have cases upon cases. We hear all the time about our constituents. I had a lady, actually – lovely lady – 89 years of age. I met with her at her house just recently. She went to Carbonear hospital and had to wait 19 hours to see her doctor. She was left in the emergency and she waited and waited that long. This is an 89-year-old lady who had to experience this. She's talked about the second visit to the hospital; she had to wait 12 hours.

This is happening everywhere. We cannot allow this to continue. In fact, my constituent, the 89-year-old lady, she ended up picking up an infection while at the hospital and now is fighting an infection and, at her age, that could not end, potentially, very well. Speaker, this is what's happening. This is reality. I mean, we hear stories about how things are great and all the investments that are going into our health care. With all of these investments, why are we not seeing progress.

The Member for Cape St. Francis, yesterday, compared *Budget 2025* to previous budgets and identified the same issues that are occurring year over year over year, yet no progress. This is what we're seeing with this government. This is what we're seeing with *Budget 2025*. It's seriously flawed. It fails to provide the relief that people urgently need, specifically with respect to health care.

I have to say when we look at the fact that the Members that I've referred to, for example, in the PC Opposition, the service that they have been providing, and as well with the District of Harbour Main. We are providing service for our constituents. We lobby for them when they can't access health care. We are the ones that they come to. We are the go-to but, as one of my constituents said, the one that had the father who was in on a stretcher for three nights, we should not have to go to our MHAs in the Opposition to access health care services.

That's what each one of these Members in the Opposition, in the PC Opposition, are doing for their constituents. They represent committed, compassionate representatives for their people. They are concerned about what's happening, and yet, we see that health care is not progressing. So, Speaker, on that, I'm going to just move to cost of living, because we are hearing, as well, people are suffering with respect to the cost of living.

These are legitimate issues that my colleagues are bringing. These are legitimate issues that we're bringing forward to garner the attention of our government so that they will listen, because we listen. We are responsible. We work hard for the people that we represent and make sure that we action their requests. This is what's become of us. It almost seems like we, in the Opposition, have become another department of government. It's the Opposition department because we are accessing government services for our constituents because they can't get the service they need from the government that governs them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, I'll tell you of the cost of living. I'll tell you about how difficult this is for constituents and all over our province. We see the skyrocketing cost of living. These are difficult times; there's no question about it. We see it with health care; we see it with the cost of living. Families are struggling to survive; seniors are struggling to survive. They're struggling with their bills. They're struggling with food prices that are going up. They can barely make ends meet.

The Liberal government, in *Budget 2025*, had a chance. They had an opportunity to actually help people who feel so burdened with the taxes that they have to pay. We heard from our Finance critic, the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, that we have to advocate for the scrapping of the sugar tax.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: And, yes, Speaker, every dollar matters, every cent matters. When you're struggling to make ends meet, every cent matters and yet, this budget is flawed. It is not providing the relief necessary. We need to see that sugar tax scrapped. Scrap the sugar tax; it's senseless.

It's a senseless tax and yet we didn't see anything in the *Budget 2025* to help create a healthier population, because that's supposedly what this tax does. But, I will say to you, that is a fallacy. That is a fallacy. No one believes it. It doesn't happen. It's not addressing the issues that it claims to address. I want to tell you of a case of a person who has been experiencing many difficulties with respect to the cost of living. I actually have had a number of conversations with her, and she's a 42-year-old single woman.

She's a hard-working woman, Speaker. She is hard working; she's worked so hard for the last 15 years as a chef in the offshore industry. She's worked all her life, pretty much, but for the last 15 years, she does 21 days on and 12 hours a day. She works

hard. She earns a good salary. She earns a good wage. She's a chef offshore but let me tell you her story. This is not an isolated story. This is a story of many working people throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

She tells about how she has to pay the provincial government a thousand dollars every month for her taxes – approximately every two weeks, \$480. Now, a thousand dollars every month, that's a lot of money. That's a lot of money even if you're making a good salary. That's \$12,000 a year. That's not easy. Now let me say that this person, she recognizes we need to have taxes. She's not denying that. That's obvious. We need to have taxes for the services that are provided, but to be taxed to this extent by the provincial government – she says 53 per cent is taken out of her paycheque by the provincial government for taxes.

That's just for the provincial Newfoundland and Labrador tax. She doesn't have a car; she says she can't afford a car. She can't afford the payments. Now, perhaps if she didn't have to pay that \$1,000 every month, she might be able to afford a car payment but she's not able to at this time. She works hard; she says she's having difficulty paying the light and power bills because they're so high, and yet, she's very, very selective in how much heat that she uses in the winter, she said.

She feels for everyone in her position. That's why she wanted to bring her case to the House of Assembly. She wanted to make sure that we know and that government knows that the working class are hurting. They're hurting, Speaker. She said she almost feels punished that she's working so hard. She feels like she may have to take in two or three roommates. That would be her, perhaps, retirement benefit or she's looking at trying to secure a second job because she can't do it. It's very, very difficult.

She's looking at securing a second job but, she said, well why would I do that because, if I do that, the provincial government will just take that in taxes. She's so

discouraged, Speaker. She's so discouraged. She's a hard-working individual, part of our working class. She says the price of food has gone through the roof when you go to a supermarket and she, being a chef, said you can't really afford to buy healthy food.

She feels discouraged and pessimistic. She's actually thinking of leaving to go to Alberta. She said she'd probably save money and be able to have that rainy day fund that she so desperately wants to have but is not able to. She's not alone. This is one example of a real person who's living this reality of not being able to sustain with the taxes that exist in this province.

So let's start with the sugar tax; at least get that out of the way. Scrap the sugar tax.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We know that carbon tax is another example where we know that most of the Members opposite, the government Members, supported that tax and voted for it. They voted for that carbon tax. That is not something that we support and we want that gone. We want it scrapped. We always wanted it scrapped. We never flip-flopped. That has been part of the PC Opposition's position and the PC Party's position.

So, Speaker, cost of living: This is very difficult times for many, many people who are struggling and we know that something has to change. It is my view that when we look at what we have, the Members of the House of Assembly for the Opposition have a strong position. We have a strong leader who will guide us through these difficult times, who is calm, who is confident and who represents that stability which is what we need in this province today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We have a strong caucus who are dedicated to put Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first. They will not neglect and ignore rural

Newfoundland like the current Liberal government has done.

Speaker, on that note, I have covered two of the issues. There are many more issues that I'd like to examine and to discuss in the coming days when we have other opportunities to speak on budget.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to get up and talk about the wonderful things that go on in Labrador West, but also some of the things that are continuing to be issues that we've yet to see resolved and we continue to advocate for and try to rectify.

One is that, once again, in this budget, we haven't seen any commitment to seniors' housing. We've seen a blurb saying that they'll look at it but they haven't actually made any full commitment to it. Once again, they're waiting around for the federal government to do something. We've tried to get the federal government to do that through five applications. Five applications denied and now, once again, we're just going to sit around and wait for the same group of people to deny it again. That's what is very disheartening.

This has been a project that Labrador West has been asking for since 2018 and, once again, we're going to see another construction season without any houses being built in Lab West, especially for seniors' housing. Once again, in the 2023 budget, they announced that they would replace the units that burned. In 2024 budget, they announced the budget would replace, and now, in 2025, once again it's in the same line item that they're going to try to replace these units. It's not anything additional, it's just replacing what was burned and yet, we still have seen long

wait-lists of people looking for housing in Labrador West.

Time and time again, through my office, we have seniors who are working minimum wage jobs trying to get by coming and looking for applications for a rental supplement or even trying to get into Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to get their names on the wait-list, but there are people that have been waiting on the wait-list for years. There are individuals that continue to call and say: Well, I'm still homeless. I'm staying on my friend's couch. I'm staying here. Still, no movement, nothing. The solution, replace the two houses that burned and add two one-bedroom apartments with that. You still have a wait-list of 30 applicants and you're only going to go and build two new units?

So, you know, we're really doing a disservice to the people that are up there. Just because we're up in Labrador, just because we're up and out of the way you can't see us from the Overpass, doesn't mean we don't exist. We do exist; we're people. We deserve services just like the rest of the province; and in talking about that, we have no home care in Labrador West. We have no personal care homes in Labrador West.

We barely have a functioning emergency room half the time now up there. We continue to have strain and pull trying to get resources, trying to get jobs filled and we continue to fall on deaf ears. Yet, when it comes to our mining industry and the extraction of minerals in Labrador, the talk of the town; but when it comes to asking for something back, it's almost like we don't exist. We're ghosts. That's what I have to talk about, this disservice that we've seen.

In the budget, they talked about seven transitional units for the Hope Haven, the women's shelter and their transitional housing. Seven units, great – great project. That was completed over a year ago but it's in this budget for some reason as a line item, as this thing that they're going to do. It's already done; people live in there.

The disappointing thing is that we haven't seen anything new. We've just had re-announcements or talk about projects that will never get off the ground without the actual stronger commitment from this provincial government; the things that we actually truly need and deserve. People deserve to be housed. People deserve to actually have somewhere safe to live. Since 2019, we continue to see homelessness. We continue to see people struggling to get housed. People struggling to pay rent. People struggling to find places to live in my region.

At the same time, you turn around and you see the massive amount of investment in the mining industry. One needs to understand, when you live in a mining town, that prosperity doesn't mean prosperity for all because what happens is, especially in mining towns and remote mining towns, when the mine wants something, they get it and it comes on the backs of the community sometimes.

When they wanted fly-in, fly-out workers and they want all of this stuff there, what ends up happening is properties and everything that sells, that goes to what the mine wants. The people that do not work in the mining industry, the people that work in the service industry, the ones that actually make our community tick, they're the ones that suffer. That's what's happening now. It's been happening since 2019 and it's only getting worse and worse and worse. If the third mine comes onstream, it's going to definitely get even worse again.

This is why, since 2019, I've been asking for the same thing over and over and over again. They need to put investment into affordable housing because we will have no town left unless people who work in jobs that are not related to the mining industry have a place to live. Right now, we don't have that. We're slowly losing everything that makes our town great because there are no volunteers anymore, there are no people working in the service industry, there are no people working at the dealerships or in the mall or anything like that. They're all either gone to work in the mine or left

because they can't afford Lab West anymore.

Then, we turn around and we have Newfoundland and Labrador Housing there and, as units went into disrepair or burned, they were never replaced. Then, when it comes to the point we go, oh, we have no affordable housing left, what do we get? We get two additional units – two. That's all we get but yet we have a wait-list of over 30. This is where the math is not adding up. This is where you're going to see that, when it comes to the economic prosperity of the region, it's going to take a dive because we have nobody living there anymore. Then, when you go on to say, oh, well, we're trying to do this or that, you can't because nobody lives there.

It also creates a bad name for the community, too. We're finding it harder and harder and harder to recruit people to move into the region because, when you talk to them, they go: Well, you have nowhere to live. I applied for this job. I got the job. I tried to find a house. I couldn't find a house and there's nothing there available.

So what we're doing is we're cutting our nose off to spite our face and then we're going around and just saying, well, that's it. That's what we're going to do, instead of actually putting the investment into a region that you know you'll get your investment back and you'll probably get your investment back tenfold because, right now, yes, despite all the troubles going on in the world, there are still four trains a day heading down the line with 240 cars, each car with 140 tons of iron ore and each ton is \$110 a ton. So trust me, we're making some good money there.

The volume that comes out of Lab West is incredible. Despite everything, people realize the largest export of this province is iron ore. It's the biggest thing we sell volume wise. As long as we have a community in Lab West, as long as there are people in Labrador West and as long as we're doing what we're doing, there will always be iron ore coming out of the region.

It is the largest iron ore deposit in North America. It is the highest grade iron ore in North America and, actually, I would argue, in the world right now. It is the most sought after iron ore in the world right now, just as ask the Japanese. They're banging at our door for it but yet we need to see some investment from this province into our community; because, without our community, there is no more Lab West, there is no more iron ore export and there is no more money to the provincial coffers.

So at the end of the day, the biggest thing that I keep asking for is, we just want a return on our investment. The investment that the people of Lab West put in is our time, our labour and our health. That's the investment that we put in and so what we're asking is that you respect our investment by making sure that there's a roof overhead and make sure that the services that everyone else in this province enjoys, we get to enjoy.

We don't have anywhere for our seniors; we have nowhere for our people, especially those on low income, to live; and I can't get doctors, I can't get nurses, I can't get teachers, I can't get sheriff's officers; I can't get Occupational Health and Safety officers, because there's nowhere for them to live. They're applying but when they realize, well, I have to go find an apartment and can't find an apartment, can't do this, they turn down the offer and we're back to square one once again. We can have all the recruitment and retention things that we want, but if there's nowhere for them to stay at the end of the day, they're not going to come.

We have a great future, a fantastic future ahead of us, as long as we make sure that a few things are in place. Especially, making sure their adhering to benefits agreements and one of the big ones that we keep rumbling on, because the lack of housing is one of reasons that some of the companies want to do fly-in, fly-out operations. That will kill the community instantly – stone dead, flat – because you just have to look across the border to our friends in Quebec who gave up that in their thing when they went

there and it completely decimated their community.

They dropped in population by 27 per cent when they went through fly-in, fly-out model. People said, well, why do I live here when I can live in Montreal and fly in and work my two weeks and (inaudible.) It completely killed their community. Now, they're trying to rise from the ashes and the only reason they're doing it is because Lab West is basically using them as an example of what not to do, and they got offended. So what do they try to do? They pulled themselves up and they're now fighting back to make sure that they keep their community.

We want to make sure that all benefits agreements are adhered to and if any new mine or anything goes up in Lab West, make sure that it's a community-first operation, make sure that we are the primary beneficiaries about what happens there and to make sure that we, as Labrador West, continue to benefit from it. We live there. We sacrificed our health, our years and everything like that to make sure that those mines stay open.

You just have to look at the old dust studies and look at the amount of people who passed away in Labrador West from silicosis, asbestosis or industrial lung disease. There's a wall in the Union Hall for 5795. One of my close friends that I grew up with there, his father's picture is up on that wall. He died of silicosis and industrial lung disease. He gave 30 years to the company.

So this is the thing, this is sacrifices that we made, and all we ask for is to make sure that we're considered for when it comes to making sure that there's a place for someone to live. Make sure that they're able to send their kids to a school. Make sure that their class has a teacher. Make sure that if anything does happen and they may go up to the hospital, there's a health care professional there for them to see. That's the only things we're asking for. It's not that hard; it's not that much.

It's just the same thing that everyone else gets to deserve, but yet, because we're up

there, far away, up in Lab West, it seems that we completely are ghosts; but the minute – the minute – someone wants to talk about some economic prosperity, we're the first picture put on a slide in the budget or anything like that. You see the picture of the train full of ore? Yeah, that's us. We did that. That's the people of Labrador West that did that. We want to make sure that, at the end of the day, we get back something of our investment.

Then, speaking of that, and I'll go back to that health care system, we have a brand new hospital. Well, kind of not new now; it's about 12 years old now but it's newer than the last one. I always like to say it's a race car without wheels. A beautiful building, great facade, murals, lots of open space and everything like that, but there's nobody in it. We can't keep it staffed. We can't make sure to, basically, keep people retained there and then, you know, I don't think there's a single actual family doctor left in Lab West now. They're all gone, anyone that had an actual family practice.

We have a partially working collaborative care team. We have some kind of hybrid walk-in clinic thing, but most times, 99 per cent of people, when they're looking for health care, they're sitting up in the emergency room waiting 12 to 14 hours to go in to see a physician that's on call there, who's also dealing with ambulances showing up and dealing with what's on the go up on the ward upstairs. So most times maybe five or six people get seen a day.

It's increasingly frustrating when there are people that are looking for things that would normally be taken care of either by family physician or the collaborative care clinic, if it was properly running and everything like that, but there's more and more people having to go up to the emergency room, wait 12 and 14 hours a day for basic things that are there. When you keep talking about it and trying to explain there has to be some better way of doing it, it's like they didn't hear you. It's just in one ear and out the other, and so what. We're completely just spinning in circles, chasing our own tail, in

the sense that there's more work that needs to be done.

We have to realize that we're in an isolated region. There's Lab West hospital and the next closest one is Labrador Health Centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, which is over 600 kilometres away. So it's not like we can just go to the next town over or another clinic over or anything like that. That's it – Labrador West Health Centre, that is it for that entire region. We also do some of the health stuff for Fermont, the Quebec side of the thing too. So, you know, it's not just us. We do some stuff for Quebec, as well – for our neighbours there.

We're an isolated region but we have a population that we're looking after of almost 13,000 people, if you count Fermont for some of the stuff that we have to help them with, but yet, we can't retain nurses. We can't retain doctors. We have a model that just seems to be crashing on itself and people are falling farther and farther behind.

We just ask that the investment be made to make sure this place is held to a standard to make sure we actually have the people that we need to continue the prosperity that everyone in the province enjoys from us, from the resources that is extracted from our region. We want to share in that, but we're not getting our just reward, I guess, is the best way to say it, for the amount of effort and the amount of sacrifice that the people of Lab West make.

Then we want to talk about air access. We spent years and years and years having pretty good air access. We had three companies at the height of it. There were three options to fly out of Lab West in 2017, or 2016, I should say. We had three options. Now we're down to a monopoly. In that time, in 2010, maybe 2009, I was able to fly from Lab City to St. John's return, \$500. I thought that was expensive at the time, but, you know, that's it. I was just out of trade school, just getting out on my own, \$500. Right now, if I wanted to fly to St. John's right now – so that is about 15 years now, in a matter of 15 years – if I wanted a last-minute ticket, I'm looking at \$1,500. In 15

years, \$1,500 if I want a last-minute ticket to fly out from St. John's here. That's just for one person.

So you expect people in this province to try to gain access to services that are not available in Lab West and you have to come into the city here for things, well you're expecting them to spend this exorbitant price. The connectivity of Newfoundland and Labrador is probably at its lowest right now because of cost barriers. People used to easily move around the province, but now with these massive cost barriers to just even get around, we're seeing connectivity at an all-time low. You're seeing sports teams travelling less. You're seeing people being less interested in doing other things around because it's just costing them so much money.

That's going to have a drain on even the internal tourism of this province. So you expect the tourist to come here and get in this province and then try to travel around this province to do any of the things that we promote and want them to do, well you just created a barrier. What, really, you're doing is cutting your nose off to spite your face, again.

So this is where we have to see some sensibility come in, some absolution on realizing that connectivity, bringing people together and working together and making sure that services are available throughout this entire province fairly, that's how you make sure that you have the ability to have a better society, to make sure that you have a better place to live.

That's what I expected to see in this budget but I didn't see as much of that as I wanted to. I see nothing for a region that contributes so much to this province. I didn't see much that would actually help with connectivity of the people of this province. I didn't see much that would actually help people move about, people who want to do more and be able to expand their horizons, instead what I see is select pockets of things that really do not help the broader focus of what we really need to do.

Like I said, we need houses. We have homelessness. In a region that is probably one of the most prosperous regions right now, that's doing so well, we have homelessness.

If you ever look up the median wage of a place like Lab West, you'd be astonished to see they're doing so great up there, but at the end of the day, a region of just Lab West, not counting our Quebec friends, we're 10,000 people, yet we have homelessness, yet we have nothing invested to help solve that situation. Instead, we got platitudes and promises that we've had since *Budget 2022*, *Budget 2023*, the same promises but nothing really coming to fruition.

There's a solution there right in front of us, just waiting to be grasped but there's no investment in it. There's no real need from this budget to actually do the things that need to be done, instead we're once again going to wait on a group that has denied us five times – the federal government.

I can go on and on about my thoughts and feelings on the rapid housing initiative that they had at the time, but, in reality, if they failed five times, why are we going back for a sixth round, instead of actually doing the right thing and just investing and putting the money down to get the project done now. Yet, we're going to go another construction season and we're not going to see anything.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I have a lesson plan before me and in my lesson plan I'm going to discuss health care in the District of Bonavista. I'm then going to talk about Saturday night attending the Fort Point Lions Club 46th Charter Night event, then I'd like to talk about the George's Brook - Milton War Memorial initiative and then the budget. Even though I talked about starting with the budget, but hopefully I'll get to that in this first speaking engagement.

I'll continue with the theme because the Member for Harbour Main, the Member for Labrador West, talked about health care. I'd like to discuss the health care in the District of Bonavista.

I want to acknowledge, first of all, some people who are viewing from home today. Viewing in Elliston, we've got Scott Martin. Scott is a retired harvester. He loves watching the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Yes, very politically astute and with him today is Pam Fleming, who is not as politically astute, but, at the same time, she's learning from Scott. I'm sure that they're tuned in. I know they're tuned in this afternoon to listen to the addresses in the House.

I also want to shout-out to Sandra Cooper who's watching and, finally, on a more sombre note, Donna Linthorne. Donna Linthorne was at the rally line in Bonavista for health care that I attended this weekend. I think everyone in the House would have known her and her husband. Her husband was Gerald, the Linthornes in Bonavista; we discussed them quite often. Unfortunately, Gerald has passed away and Donna was at the health line, the rally line the weekend, and I was talking with her.

I'll have more to say about Gerald in a future speaking engagement on the fishery because Gerald looked back with great fondness on the seal harvest. That's one that we'll leave for the fishery.

On Saturday afternoon, Speaker, at 1 p.m. on Hospital Road, just adjacent to the hospital in Bonavista, was the rally line. About 30 to 40 residents of the area, ranging in age from probably 30 to 83 years of age. The rally line started three years ago because the hospital doors would be locked at Bonavista hospital. People showed up in an emergent situation only to find that the hospital doors were locked.

If anybody has seen it on Facebook this past weekend, there's a large four by four

poster of a gentleman who had passed away, Charlie Marsh. Charlie Marsh had asthma. Other than that he was a very active individual. He was a master carpenter in the area. Seventy-two years of age, if I recall correctly, and a large picture of Charlie there.

The story is told where Charlie found his asthma bad so he left Elliston and drove to the hospital, only to find that it was on diversion. Charlie went back home. He got through the night. The next morning, he was much worse and called an ambulance. The hospital was still closed, the emergency doors. He was transported by ambulance to Clarendville. One hour into that trip, he passed away. He needed a nebulizer. He needed a mask, he needed oxygen – something that could have been provided by a health care professional. This is a story that is told in Bonavista and area and you could wonder why they're not more concerned than what they are.

They have an ask; I've asked it here in the house. I've done a petition. I've asked the government to assure that the doors in Bonavista hospital are open 24-7 for someone who needs it. Why I ask that is that, in Central – and the Speaker may be able to relate to this – I think you've got it pretty well achieved that they can pivot. If there's no doctor, to other health care professionals that work in the facility to operationalize it with a virtual link to an emergency doctor.

The residents in Bonavista would ask, why isn't that happening in Eastern rural? Why not? Why isn't that occurring in Bonavista? Let me give you a couple of examples. I gave you that one which, unfortunately, many in my area – maybe rightly or wrongly – would attribute the doors being closed to this man losing his life. Let me give you two more situations that have occurred within the last week. We've had more lockdowns or diversions in Bonavista hospital in 2025 than we've had in all of 2024; only a drop in the bucket to 2023 – 2023 was really an outlandish amount of time – so we're doing a little bit of regression in Bonavista.

Saturday, of this weekend, two gentlemen were, with a chainsaw, sawing wood and one of those gentlemen cut his hand. I say his hand or his arm but, anyway, it's his extremity. His buddy quickly drove him to the emergency in Bonavista. Some would say, well, why don't people know that the hospital is closed? Not everyone will go onto the site of Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services to find out that the office is closed. The first default is to head to emerg.

They head to the emerg only to find that we were on diversion, doors locked to the emergency. He left at that time and went around to the outpatient. Keep in mind, in this hospital, there are health care professionals but I'm assuming it was the doctor or somebody was missing out of the emerg for it to close. Luckily, they were brought in and went in through the outpatient where they got triaged, dressing packed and they called an ambulance. They sent him to Clarendville for emergency surgery on his arm. I say that, Speaker, because that could've been another repeat situation.

My colleague from Labrador West stated: If we don't have housing, our community is dying. He's losing the fabric of his community. How can you expect the Bonavista Peninsula, if this is going to occur for people, to have the comfort to stay or for people that will entertain coming to the area? That is tough. If you know when the medical services are needed, you know that you can't depend on those doors being open.

Let me give you one more example – this gentleman luckily, at Clarendville hospital, remains and the only thing being he's had his emergency surgery. Let me tell you another one that recently went through, that is okay, too, and I would hope discharged yesterday – though I don't know. I know she was still in the hospital yesterday.

Last Saturday, this lady is 80 years old and she was very sick, waited a long time to go to the hospital and her son – she has four children: one in Alberta and others, but two at home – brought her to Bonavista hospital.

They got into Bonavista hospital, only to find that emerg had to close because the doctor had to transport a critical patient to Clarendville. It had to close. So the lady and her son decided they would drive to Clarendville. They drove to Clarendville and got up 10 p.m. at night.

When it hit around 12:30 or quarter to one and people in the waiting room, like the hon. Member for Harbour Main was saying about Carbonear, that were there 10 that morning had not gotten in yet, she wasn't very hopeful that she was going to get in there soon. So she had went and asked the clerk: Has the doctor returned to Bonavista. Of which, the answer was yes. Well, what did they do? The lady, with her son, drove back to Bonavista hospital.

They got in the wee hours of the morning. Arriving at Bonavista hospital at 2 o'clock – she needed a wheelchair to be wheeled into emerg at 10 a.m. that morning – she needed a wheelchair to be brought in to see the doctor at 10 a.m. that next morning. They took an X-ray and what did they find? She had a ruptured gallbladder. They called the emergency and they sent that 80-year-old lady back to Clarendville again for emergency surgery.

Now, I would say to you, the Members of the House of Assembly, by those two stories, would you understand that the people and the residents in the District of Bonavista, right now, have reason for concern?

When we have the rally line – the rally line are ultra supportive of the doctors and the nurses within the Bonavista health care system – we have the Town of Bonavista and the council, which are ultra engaged in this, and we have the town council of Trinity Bay North, which are lobbying for this. Three entities, plus yours truly who spoke about it in this House several times, one would ask the question: Why are the doors of Bonavista hospital still locked? With health care professionals inside, still locked, when someone would have to travel one hour and 40 minutes to Clarendville for the

closest emerg. Neither one of these people here, conceivably, may not have made it.

These are the things that we have to deal with. We've got to have access to our hospital; we must have it in order to build a community and maintain what we have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I just want to add one more before I go on. I'm gone way over on this one and my lesson plan is going to be totally – but I've been known to do that lots of times. The best of lesson plans but I never got through it.

The government's new plan had a Community Advisory Council, CAC. They were going to set up a CAC in the area that they would be a liaison between the public of which the health care system serves and the decision-makers, NLHS, who looks after the system.

We had a public meeting back two years ago, three years ago and it came up at the Garrick Theatre in Bonavista, not by me, but a gentleman by the name of Reg Durdle had asked the audience, does anybody know about the CAC, this Community Advisory Council?

The historic Garrick Theatre was blocked, some standing, three people knew. One was on the committee, Reg knew himself and, well, yours truly, I knew it existed. The rest of the population of the Garrick Theatre didn't have a sweet clue whether it was good enough to eat. They didn't know. I met with the minister, officials from NLHS, one of the topics we discussed was that that is not working. That committee is not working.

I mention those examples here to you as examples that one would think the committee ought to be aware of and they ought to be active on making sure the doors aren't closed. The rally line, 30 to 40 people on Saturday – they call me by my first name. Has the CAC, Craig, started yet? Yes, but nobody knows. How can we get in contact with this committee if we wanted to pass on some information?

I would say to you if this is truly a liaison between the population the health care are serving, then whoever is responsible we ought to be able to approach that person to say, it needs some tweaking; it's not doing its job. It's not doing its function.

We've got that link in between the people that are being served and I would say this government has rolled in education. We had decision-making in education closer to the peninsula. We had it for years. All during my time, we had the decision-making close; it was on the peninsula. Then it moved slightly off. Now it's gone straight in here on the Avalon. There seems to be no conduit or connectivity between them, it's misfiring. Same thing is happening with the health.

I would say with that, open the doors and my last petition on that was that the doors ought never be locked in Bonavista hospital.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: In my three remaining minutes, Speaker, Saturday afternoon I attended the rally line on Hospital Road. Seven that night I had the pleasure of attending Fort Point Lions Club who had their 46th Charter. Now, any time we talk about the work of the Lions, I'm sitting by my colleague here from Exploits who is the lion of this caucus over here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Past president, sold about upwards of five to six million tickets to us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Some of you over there might think I'm exaggerating, but I don't think so.

Anyway, what a wonderful organization it was, and this is not a large one. This organization was sponsored in, chartered in 1979 by adjacent Port Rexton. Port Rexton was chartered in 1977, being chartered by Bonavista, Bonavista was chartered by Port Union. All of them were there present, but this Fort Point Lions Club is a very strong

organization. They might be short on numbers but the things of which they do.

I sat pretty close to and listened to a very inspiring speech, which I'm not going to have time for, from Bradley Moss, our Citizens' Rep. He is the District Governor, probably from the District of Ferryland?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: Okay. Anyway, he knows the hon. Member for Ferryland quite well.

He had a wonderful – and I asked him to send me, but I know my time is going to run out, but just what the Fort Point does and some of the things they've done. Local school, very active school in Bishop White They've donated \$1,000 to the breakfast program just recently. They gave another \$1,000 to the local food bank, which they jointly work and operate with Port Rexton to look after the whole Trinity Bight area – a wonderful operation. They had \$1,000 to the school volleyball team they donated recently. They help the sick and the needy, not only with a monetary donation, but they often help them with transportation when needed.

Finally, this last one, which I'll end, and that might get me to that story that Bradley Moss told on Saturday night. They donate used eyeglasses and they send them to Bishops Falls for processing. What they do with those used glasses is phenomenal. That is a story for the next day.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Gambin-Walsh): The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to rise in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of the wonderful District of Topsail - Paradise.

We're going through, of course, the budget debate, and concurrent to that, of course,

we're going through the Estimates process, whereby we can get more specific details on the budget. Eventually, we'll be called to vote on the budget. I look at this as I have to look at the whole picture. I have to look at the whole picture. It would be careless for me not to, and I'd be contrary to the code I signed in terms of helping residents of Topsail - Paradise. So it's not all about what's in the budget, but it also includes what's not in the budget. So it's a full picture you look at.

When I looked at the budget this year, of course we saw the reannouncement again of a high school for Paradise, which is something that's been on the agenda for many years now. Again, no real details on when that will be built or when the shovels will be in the ground. But I did find out through Estimates, contrary to what ministers have said about high school, in terms of it being able to accommodate all high school students in Paradise, I've learned that that's not actually the case. So I will be looking for more definitive responses on that because the parents in the community and the committee in the community have been told otherwise. So I'll continue to deal with that.

The other thing that applies to Topsail - Paradise in the budget was the announcement of the rehabilitation of Route 60. Again, another issue that I raised many, many times. I've sent pictures. I've sent maps. I've sent diagrams, correspondence, media releases and the like. All I can say from what's announced in the Roads Plan and what's included in the budget for this coming year is very cryptic. It doesn't give us full details.

Now, I will say I have had, since the budget day, discussions with the responsible minister. He could not tell me right away what it includes, but we will have further discussions. Judging by some of the engineering markings on the road, it's not taking in the stretch that's in the most need of repair. So on behalf of Topsail - Paradise residents, I will be pushing on that, as well, to ensure that the areas that need repair are the ones that will get repair.

Also noted in the budget was an alternative route in and out of Paradise. Again, very much needed, and it's briefly noted in the budget. I think half a sentence to it, but it's something that's very important to the community and, again, lacking details, which is something I'll continue to work towards getting more details on.

So, in terms of voting on for or against the budget, I'm not there yet until I get some more information on these items that are near and dear to the residents of Topsail - Paradise.

Related to other items on broader band, I look at something I've advocated for a while has been continuous glucose monitoring devices. We have some of the highest rates of diabetes in the country. We have an aging population.

Diabetes Canada, which is a world-recognized research hub for diabetes, they have told us that 30 per cent of strokes can be avoided with the proper monitoring of diabetes; 40 per cent of heart attacks can be avoided; 50 per cent of kidney failure requiring dialysis can be avoided; 70 per cent of non-traumatic leg and foot amputations can be avoided.

Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness, and we always hear from government, give us some solutions. This is a solution I've offered many times and there's been a little bit here, a little bit there. Diabetes Canada, a couple of years ago, projected the savings to this province in funding continuous glucose monitoring devices is \$80 million-plus, and it's probably even more now. It's an investment in health of our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: That is a huge chunk of change, and it's probably even greater now when you look at individuals who can continue – I mean, this is the priceless part of it. You have individuals who can continue healthy lives with these monitoring devices, continue to be productive in society. Not being rushed somewhere in an ambulance,

not being rehabilitated because of a heart attack or stroke or an amputation.

These are real things, and this is an investment that actually pays back and not in the budget. Eighty million dollars to a hundred million dollars could be saved in the health care and open that up for others who really need to be in there – \$80 million dollars.

When we talk about children in schools, you talk about these monitoring devices. Now, I've been in some of the schools and you see parents coming in at odd hours of the day to make sure the child's glucose levels are fine and either giving them a needle or not. But these devices can be used with insulin pumps. These devices, parents could monitor their child and not be there. It's a huge life-changing investment, and in many cases it saves lives. So that's not in the budget. That's something that's not in the budget, which I've advocated for for a long, long time.

What is in the budget, there's one thing in the budget that we've argued for, and it has not gone as far as we'd like it. It was offering the shingles vaccine to residents 65 to 70 years of age, immunocompromised residents. So there are special seniors, apparently. Not all seniors are treated the same. Seniors are the people, the fathers and mothers, the grandparents that built this province. We have all these lovely programs that speak to aging at home and aging well, but words are shallow if you don't see the actions to accompany them.

Shingles vaccine should be available to any senior who wants it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Any senior who wants it.

For any of you who have not dealt with your seniors and finding them a home or finding them long-term care, I can tell you, it's not a pretty picture for our seniors out there and those dealing with dementia. When you listen to the report that's just come out by the *Nature* journal – and the *Nature* journal

is a world-leading, multidisciplinary science journal. This is not some ad hoc group. They've indicated that those who have received the shingles vaccine were 20 per cent less likely to develop dementia.

We look at reports, consultations that have happened, and we look at the dementia-care plan, the action plan that was put out, and I look at the number one focus in that plan: "Increase Awareness, Reduce Risk of Dementia, and Address Stigma." Reduce the incidence of dementia.

So here we have the *Nature* journal, a well-respected multidisciplinary science research organization, who is reporting that the shingles vaccine would reduce by 20 per cent the possibility of developing dementia. Now, much like what I've spoken to on the continuing glucose monitoring devices, I suspect there's huge dollars connected to reducing dementia. And again, you do not want to go through it. You do not want to have a loved one go through it. It's a very sad state of affairs.

But when I tried to find out the cost of what dementia might cost society – so I looked at the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis. They did a report on dementia and they looked at the long-term financial burden for Canada in 2020. The financial burden in helping those with dementia in Canada was \$40.1 billion at an average of \$67,200 per person. That figure comes from hospital stays, emergency department calls, caregivers, home care, out-of-pocket expenses, the loss of individuals who were otherwise productive individuals and, not just those with dementia, those who have to leave their jobs to assist.

So here we look at the shingles vaccine and our seniors again, and this is, again, an investment that is very common or very parallel to the continuous glucose monitoring devices in reducing hospital stays and emergency calls and so on and so on. Don't take it from me; I'm quoting the experts here, but what this does for seniors, those who we want to respect and be able to live their final years in dignity – lovely

words, but you have to act on it. You have to act on it.

You can talk about the money that's been invested in long-term care and the like, but I can tell you, you cannot do it unless you have the people there to do the work. That's two, in my mind, very, very commonsensical solutions or suggestions that would make our province much healthier and, certainly, have our seniors realize they are respected and they are dignified.

Again, I look at when I was dealing with seniors who were displaced in their older years, one in one establishment and one in the other and trying to get them together. We heard about other places where they were putting two in the one room, and that. You know, think about, it's your father, your mother, your grandfather or your grandmother, in some cases your great-grandmother or your great-grandfather because we are living longer. It's just all about respect and seeing some contribution, financially, in the budget, that deals with this and that helps this.

It's not easy. I dealt with an elderly couple who were in very hard state. One was in one establishment and one in the other, and one actually was dealing with dementia. You had to be there; you were lucky if you visited, you might catch the person on a good day, whereas if they were together there, they would have those good days. They would have those good days.

I remember one couple, I had just gotten them together and I'll say with the help of the past Health minister, who's no longer here – I'll give him credit too. I reached out to him and we worked it and we got these two together. They were together for two days and one passed. I'll never forget the tears of joy and sadness mixed together from their children that they were able to be together for those final moments.

When we look at the budget and we think about – we see what's in it, but we also have to look at the full picture. We have to look at the full picture on what's in it and what's not in it and balance that when it

comes time to vote on the budget. I know what my residents were hoping to see in the budget and I know what their views are because many have called me and I know what seniors have been looking for, and some of it would be what I'd call common sense but, my late father would say, common sense is not that common. That's probably true.

Another thing I learned in my government days from a minister who I cannot recall now, but that minister had said policy should never override common sense. Those are two great statements because umbrella policies don't catch everyone. It doesn't catch everyone. We talk about the education system and what's been invested in the education system, but I know I've gotten many letters since that are breaking down the numbers, telling me the amount that's there for the 400 teachers and teacher assistants and learning assistants is not near enough to hire that many.

They broke it down very logically and that's a great thing. We all know from an education point of view that it's not all about the money thrown at it. It has to do with the class composition; it has to do with the number of students that are in those classrooms. These are all items that need to be looked at and inclusion is a big part of that.

I just attended a meeting with a school group, a principal, counsellors, we had the doctor on Zoom to have a discussion with a parent who is one of many who has a child with complexities. We sat down and we went through and discussed what's happening in the schools and what can be done to help these individuals, these parents and these children, get the best education they can. We worked through it and came up with some solutions that could happen and the thing that's very evident there is that teachers, administrators, those in the classrooms, those in the schools, they want to do the best for the kids they teach.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: They want – there is absolutely no debating that, but you have to have the resources. I want to fix that flat tire but I don't have a bar. I've been wanting to fix that tire as much as I can, but if I don't have the bar to take the lug nuts off, it isn't happening, and you can sense the frustration sometimes with the teachers.

They want to help but they're in a classroom – I heard the other day that one class has 37 kids and some of those with complexities. You cannot set them up to fail, you have to set them up to succeed and they all want to do that. They all want to see the children in their classrooms succeed. Again, it goes back to the budget. It goes back to the Estimates.

Education had Estimates this past Friday, and we asked some specific questions. Unfortunately, many questions – well not many – there was a handful of some good questions we asked that were deferred and trying to get you the additional information. But some of the questions I had asked, I would think that you've got staff there, you've got the minister responsible, and you would think that this would be something that they would have top of the mind.

So my job, and I'm going to continue to do it, is to ensure that the issues and concerns of the residents of Topsail - Paradise are top at mind for this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a pleasure to stand and speak in the House on the budget. I've been there for ever so many budgets now, and through that time you get the opportunity to speak a bit more freely, I guess, in the sense that we're not into legislation or sometimes you're in the Question Period, and you're more focused on Members' statements or what have you. But the budget is a great opportunity to speak about a lot of things, as my colleagues have already spoken and

spoken well on issues of importance to them, to their districts, to the people they represent and to the people of this province. It's something I guess we should never take lightly, and I don't say that as cliché. I've always said that.

I was going to talk a bit about my district, but I'm just going to – I think a lot lately – me and the Speaker actually were walking out last night, and on the way to drive home, we were saying that this business has its moments, and it's not an easy job. I remember you know 11 years ago – this upcoming, whenever the election's called, will be my fifth election because the first one I was unsuccessful. So 2014, I started out, and I was well known or well placed, I had a lot of connections in one part of my district, not the other. I start knocking doors. We hear this all the time when it's election season – now it's the federal election, and I see people out knocking doors and engaging, and it's good to see.

But I remember, I started knocking doors and I was thinking – I went out before the nomination was called and started knocking doors and knocking doors and knocking doors in this area that I was not familiar with. I was trying to introduce myself, tell them who I was. But I remember the energy and the passion that I had because I knew, at that time, this is not an easy place to get. I spent a long time sitting in the bleachers so to speak, sitting in the benches, watching this place. I used to always wonder – my God, when I was approached to run I kind of chuckled at first because I couldn't envision my own self being here.

I remember, when I knocked – I kept knocking and knocking. So anyway, the election was called, and I went back out and I knocked a second time. So some people started smiling, it was about a few months later, and unfortunately, it was a close call, but I lost and that was fair game. I always say the electorate are never wrong.

Fast-forward a year later, and an election was called, a general election – that was a by-election. Lo and behold, I went against – most people questioned me going again,

and I said no, I wasn't satisfied. I went down to this area again and I start knocking again. So when I come the third time, people looked at me and they nodded and they smiled and they acknowledged my determination.

But that was determination, there's no doubt about it. I was successful. That wasn't my big margin. I pulled it out of the so-called fire. But it made me appreciate just how difficult it is to get in here. We take some time, we get up here – and I look at Members opposite and a lot of us came in together. I think it was 20 of us at the one time. There was 19 Liberals and one PC, so there you go, do the math. It wasn't a good election for this side of the House.

I do recall how hard it was to get here. As time has gone on, there are times that we kind of get complacent, and we get tired and you get frustrated and you get annoyed with a lot of things. But my reality check has always been, it takes me back, and never forget – the saying goes you should never forget where you came from, how you got to where you're to. I've never forgotten that. Probably in a sense of way, I always played – not played the role. I think I always felt a bit of an underdog, like I was challenged.

But the worst thing you could do – and my colleague from Ferryland, who are great sports followers and were competitors, and he's a much better hockey player than I am, but I always said you'd love to have me on your team because I don't like to lose. But I like to be challenged. If you challenge me, it's the worst. That's the most challenge. If you tell me I can't do something, that makes me determined to do it. I'm not always successful, but my determination, that gets my so-called juices flowing.

So I was there thinking, speaking on budget, speaking in general, I told a few of our candidates – we got some candidates now that agreed to run. They're campaigning and they're trying to get known – the same thing I done. There's one person in particular, and I said, I tip my hat to him, because that's what they're doing. I said,

I've done the exact same thing you're doing and it was refreshing.

I see it on all sides, not just our candidates. When I see that hunger and desire, because they appreciate how difficult it is to get in here and stand in your place and to represent a district. Most all of us in this House represent districts we live in and we love. That, to me, is my driving force, and it's a driving force every day.

I listened to my colleague from Harbour Main speak earlier, and my colleague from Bonavista spoke just now, and they talk about the passion – and, of course, my colleague from Topsail - Paradise just now. It's all about the constituents. It's all about the people we represent. But ultimately, it's about the province. We may represent one out of 40 districts, but it's very seldom a day goes by the issues we're speaking about don't affect every single person of this province.

We get here in Question Period daily – daily – and we're talking about, it could be ambulance response times, there's mental health, there's crime in our communities, there's cost of living and there are fisheries issues. That affects us right throughout this province. So even though government are the ones tasked with the \$10.5 billion – correct me if I'm wrong – almost \$11-billion budget, it's incumbent on every single person in this House how that's spent, where it's spent, if it's spent right and make sure the people of this province are looked after properly.

I figured I wanted to share that because I don't share that a lot. I say sometimes it's a pleasure to stand in my place, but that's something that I really feel near and dear to me. We won't be here forever in our place in this House of Assembly. I know I won't. I have future plans.

I'm running again, so don't anyone think I'm not. I'm on the ballot next election, but I want to make one thing clear, I have a little boy, a little grandson. I have two girls and I'm very proud of, two young women, but I have a little boy that, I tell you, that puts

everything in perspective. As much as I love doing what I'm doing here, there's a little boy that's home now and when poppy comes through the door, there's nothing else matters to us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: That's where life is really to. I enjoy my job and I continue to represent the people of Conception Bay South and I will continue to do that, but there's life after politics. To anyone out there, there's life after politics and there will be life after politics when I go and I have a little boy and I'll probably have more than that, who knows, and I look forward to enjoying every moment there.

Until then, I'm here and I'm here to represent the people of Conception Bay South and I'll continue on doing that. I'd be remiss sometimes, I probably don't speak about it enough, but I couldn't be prouder and happier to be in the role I'm in and I'll leave it at that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: When I talk a lot about that, I goes into another mode and I lose my rhythm. But I want to kind of go into my district. I said Conception Bay South is somewhere I proudly represent, but there are a couple of issues in Conception Bay South that is outstanding, it's something that I've spoke about many times and it's important for me to continue to speak about, is the lack of health care services, access to health care.

I live in a municipality, a town that's 30,000 people, and my colleague from Harbour Main and Topsail - Paradise, they bookend me. There are almost 30,000 people represented there, but there's no health services in Conception Bay South. You have to pay for blood work. There are a couple of medical clinics there and you have fee-for-service blood work. That's it.

I have no public transit. If you don't have a family member to get you to one of the acute-care hospitals or if you can afford a

taxi, that's your only way there. There is no other way out. I've always said we're so close, yet we're so far away. I've advocated, and I'll continue to advocate, for urgent care clinic in Conception Bay South, a collaborative care clinic.

Me and my colleague from Harbour Main, we met with the Health Accord back in the day, Dr. Parfrey and, I think, Sister Davis – I can't remember if it was the two of them – and we implied at the time, because we share the same concerns, having something in the upper end of Conception Bay South.

At the time there was no push-back. There was acknowledgement that there had to be some form of a collaborative care clinic. That has still not happened and we're still waiting. I mentioned it in Estimates last night and the Acting Minister of Health and Community Services told me to watch his space. So I politely asked, watch you space, what does that really mean? He means watch his space.

So I'm going to watch his space and wait. Hopefully, he'll announce it before the House closes, who knows, but the people of Conception Bay South deserve that. They need that because, just today – I'm considered to be a person that has a family doctor – I made an appointment, a regular checkup appointment. In-person appointments are late July; virtual is late June.

I'm not alone, but I've got a question and I always think of this so I'm going to ask. So, on paper, do I have a family doctor? I don't know if I do. If I've got to make an appointment with doctor and I can't get in to see him in person until late July and now we are in the second week of April, do I have a family doctor? I think it's a valid question.

As a matter of fact, last night in Estimates – and I know, Speaker, you were Chair of the Estimates Committee – I had that noted to ask the minister and I forgot it, actually, but that's my question. I'm not in the numbers; I'm considered to be someone with a family doctor. I'm among thousands and thousands and thousands of people out

there in that same boat. Does anyone factor in those numbers?

Another issue: Does anyone factor in emergency room visits that don't ever happen or people leave? I think my colleague from Ferryland had mentioned, when he spoke on the budget debate yesterday or something, they're coming out with the pile in the night after six hours in the emergency room, they're going down through the list and the list gets smaller and smaller. They never went to emerg to hang out, to look around, to see what the locals are at. They went there because they were sick. So if they left, that doesn't mean they're any better. Does anybody track that?

I even got a better question than that, and this can go out to anyone that's out in the health authority, does anyone follow up with those people? Because they left, does that just go over on the pile and forgot about? I don't know of anyone who gets called at home. I have not been told. I've talked to lots of people who left the emergency room but I do not know if they are followed up at home.

I think that's a valid argument, because how many people get this chest pain or you hear tell that they had sweats or they were sick? Not what you're thinking of a heart attack. You don't know. I mean, you're thinking you're just off or you have a stomach bug; how many stories do we hear like that? So if you go over and all of a sudden you're sitting and you start subsiding and you're here looking at the time and it's a 10- to 15-hour wait, you're going home. How many of those situations turn tragic? Is there any data kept on that? Is there any follow-up done on that?

I think it's a valid question because when you go in and do triage, they have all the information on you – everything on you. There's no reason no one can't contact you. So maybe – just maybe – someone should do a follow-up and call those people. You can't blame someone if they're feeling miserable and they think it's okay and it's going to pass and, after eight or 10 hours, they decide to go home because they have

to lie down. They can't lie down sitting up in one of those chairs if they're not feeling well. Why aren't they checked up on?

I think that it's something that I truly believe is missing in our system and I think the system is overwhelmed and, by being overwhelmed, you're seeing exactly the results of it: the people are not getting the care they need. I'll have lots more to speak about health yet, because I could be going for a while.

Another thing in my district, too, that's of major importance is Frank Roberts school. Of note, it's an issue that's been the forefront for the last couple of years. It was a couple of years ago here in the House. There was a lot of discussion on that school. I know I made a lot of discussion. It was infested with mice and rats. It was dirty. It was dilapidated. Now, don't get me wrong, it's still no better, but it's not as dirty. They went in and did a deep clean, or I think the minister at the time told me it was a triple deep cleaned. They came in with pest control and what have you, they fixed the tiles that were black from water leaks and hoses running out of the ceiling into garbage buckets – unbelievable. It really is still incredible.

As recently as this past week a lady reached out to me and these issues are still there. They're starting to reoccur again now, because it's an old school. The school needs to be replaced. I've implied upon. I've written the minister. I've spoken in the House. I've asked the Premier. This is not a new issue and it's not a new issue to the people I represent.

So a lady this week came back to me and she told me the same things are happening again. Right back to square one, she said, a lot of the same issues are starting to reoccur again. Her argument is her son will not be there to see a new school. They're just trying to get through the year or two they have left to get out to the high school and they will not be there. I mean, we know a new school is six to seven years, or could even be longer to get replaced. I'm not sure that the one in Paradise is ever going to get

built. I think the Member for Topsail - Paradise is going to live in hope on that, but we'll continue to wait.

I think it's a bit of planning money the year – last year, I think they gave them, I don't know, \$50,000 to buy a loose leaf. I'm not sure what they got this year. They're trying to keep the wolf from the door so to speak, but these people are determined and I respect their determination. Actually, my colleague from Topsail - Paradise done a great job in advocating for this district on getting that school. I commend him for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Actually, he's done such a good job, that people in my district were critical of how come he got a school and I never. So there you go. I'll be able to give him credit.

I come back on that one to say that I think every district or every community that needs a school should have one, and I was happy that Paradise were getting one and we'll continue to fight to get one in Conception Bay South.

Your children, no matter where they go, no matter who they're represented by, no matter what party, no matter what colour of the politician, you should never have to go to school and be subjected to conditions like that, no matter where you live in this province. Not in this country, not in this province, not this day in age, that's a no-no. It should never be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: It should never be dictated by politics. I've always felt and I always do believe there are too many decisions in here, in today's world – and it's getting worse I find – is dictated by which party you're with.

Again, my two colleagues on both ends, roadwork – they're fighting for roadwork in their respective districts now, both of them tie into both of mine. Topsail - Paradise has a little bit and Harbour Main has a little bit of

roadwork that needs to be done adjoining their districts where they bookend. They've argued and fought for roadwork but they still don't know exactly what's there. They're working on trying to get some details.

Notionally, it's put there just to say it's there but no one knows. I guarantee you, you go to some other districts in this province and I'd say if you looked at the minister's district and a lot of other previous ministers of TI, there's no problem to find pavement.

There's so much so there was a story done on the Minister of Tourism – and forgive me if I can't get his district name right, Trinity - Bay de Verde, is it?

Anyways, it was done by CBC. Ironically, it was done by the current Member or current candidate for the Terra Nova Peninsula for the Liberals. He done the story. So how bad was it when a fellow Liberal was out roasting you on CBC News? How bad? I quipped a little joke. I said, so are you supporting him, because I remember the story wasn't very complimentary. But it was miles and miles and miles and miles and miles of pavement and I can go on more than that, it's more than miles. There were roads paved out there that people told me that there haven't been 10 cars drive over it in a week – unbelievable, top of the line roads.

Then we got two people on each end of me that represent areas with tens of thousands of people living there, one of the busier roads in the province, and they're begging. It feels like they've got to beg for pavement. Think about that – terrible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: It's not what's expected and it's not what we should expect of elected officials. No matter if you're Liberal or if you're PC or if you're or NDP or you're independent, we all represent people in this province, and people in this province deserve to be treated with respect. I've always said this, I don't care what you are, if you're Tory or Liberal or whatever, treat them with respect. If you need a road paved, you should have a road paved. If

you need a school, you should have a school. If you need health care services, you should have health care services, regardless of who you vote for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Under our Code of Conduct, one of the codes of conduct – people don't read the Code of Conduct. I actually read it. One of the lines under Code of Conduct, you have to represent all people in your district, no matter who they voted for, no matter who they represent. That's from the Code of Conduct. When we take our oath, that's in the Code of Conduct, and that's something that I've always said in this House – it's not the first time I've said it and not the last time, but people should adhere to it.

Speaker, my last minute, I have a motion.

AN HON. MEMBER: Surprise.

B. PETTEN: Surprise and a shock – a non-confidence amendment.

I move an amendment, seconded by the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, that all the words after the word "that" be deleted in a motion before the House, Motion 1, and the following words be substituted: The House faults the Liberal government for its failure to support, recruit and retain nurses, doctors and other health care professionals, its failure to provide primary health care for all residents, its failure to lower the cost of living in this province for seniors and families, its failure to take the necessary steps to decrease crime in our communities, and its failure to stimulate a robust, diverse economy.

Thank you.

SPEAKER (Bennett): We're going to take a short recess to review the proposed amendment and we'll report back to the House after.

This House do stand in recess.

Recess

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready?

Upon review of the proposed amendment, it is ruled that the amendment is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

So, Speaker, when I finished off just now I was talking about the conditions of the schools, and I know Frank Roberts in my own district, but a while back I actually went out on a news release on it as well, it's not the first time, again, I talked about this and it's the condition of our hospitals, the cleanliness and the actual preventative maintenance going on in our hospitals.

People go to the hospital to get well. They get in the hospital and there's holes in the walls, there's flooring missing, there's mould in the corners, there are rat traps everywhere, the cleanliness is not up to scratch and when you make it public, they go and they close off a room. They condemn that washroom; they condemn that hospital room. You go back and you'll get another complaint. They'll go back and they'll condemn that room.

In Estimates last night, I asked, what is the solution? I don't see any solutions because this issue doesn't go away. This is not an issue – okay, it's dealt with and over with. There was a big push on, they went in one time and did a major cleaning of an area – of an area. The rest of the place was not touched. It was just that area that you focus on. It's putting out fires.

Right now, actually, Speaker, my sister has been there, she's had a lengthy illness and she's still in there, and I have to tell you, she's the evidence herself sending me pictures. It's unreal. I've gone out there, it's not really the place you really – well, in my

opinion, it's not conducive to what a main acute-care hospital in the province. You know, the Health Sciences Centre, it's not what it should be. It's nothing to be proud of when you go down the halls.

I mean, this is nothing to do with doctor and nurses. Absolutely nothing to do with doctors and nurses. It's nothing to do with any of the staff. I'm not accusing anybody. It's not the proper delivery. It's not the proper organization. It's not the proper operation. This is all stuff that can be done. You've got to have a plan in place to deal with it. It's cleanliness and preventative maintenance; it's a whole package here. It's not a finger pointing at any staff, not at all, it's about how our health care systems are run; ultimately, that falls back on government.

All this stuff falls back to government and you're spending \$3.5 billion a year into the health authority to deliver health care to our province in our hospitals. That's a lot of money. That's lot of money. A department over \$4 billion, almost 40 per cent of the provincial budget, and you're going in the hospital and the rooms are filthy, the washrooms are filthy, there are holes in the walls, there's mould, there's paint missing, there rat and mice traps – unbelievable. You look down the hallway and you wonder where the door is. There's equipment here. There are apparatuses here. The nurses are ran off their feet. They're struggling. I know they struggle; you can see it, I see it, they struggle. Who's responsible?

We get caught up sometimes in the recruitment and retention – me included – all of us do. The nurses, that's a huge, huge issue. Where do we not stop and, you know, so-called smell the roses. There's more to this picture, too. There's a bigger, bigger picture and sometimes it frustrates me, and it should frustrate. I hear this story often and I'm sure if I challenged every MHA in this House, they've heard constituents tell them the same stories. I'm not the first person to stand up on. I'm not the only person that hears that from my constituents and hears it from the general public.

I'll tell you something interesting. I've said it many times, but I go to a personal care home in my district for a good reason, because my mother is there, and I get great enjoyment sitting down, talking to the residents. It is pretty interesting and I find it entertaining, but it's insightful. There are three things I hear almost constantly. I'll go there and I'm sure if I sit down long enough the next time I visit, I'll hear the same thing again – b'y, health care is gone. That's the word, it's gone. I don't know what's going to be the end of it, the health care is gone. What's going on, everyone gone mad? How can you afford to live; I can't afford to buy anything?

Cost of living, health care and safer communities: three pillars that the PC Party stood by and it's in our platform, but when I hear them, that's the first thing I think about. That is so much where people are to today. That's where we're at. That's where we're in society. The safer communities, every other day we're hearing shelter in place here or shelter in place there, gunshots here – armed robberies we don't even pay attention to.

There was a time when, if you heard of an armed robbery, it caught everyone's attention. It was big news. We listened to it on the news and everyone was talking, did you hear about the armed robbery or bank robbery? My God, it was – I mean, it'd give you cold shivers. Now it's almost that we've become immune to all this stuff. It's reported and we just move on. It's a little blip on the news – shots fired at houses, drive-by. Oh, yeah? That's really, really unfortunate for a place like Newfoundland, a place like St. John's, and it's not only St. John's. There was a shelter in place, I think, in Grand Falls-Windsor last week. It's not just located here in the city. It's spread out. That's pretty frightening.

In 2015, when I ran in the election, we're going back 10 years, I remember when I knocked doors, a lot of seniors come to the door and I did not know at the time – that was not my issue; it was roads and the traditional stuff when you go campaigning and you figure the people are going to be

looking for help where they're concerned – but as I started going door after door after door, the more common theme I heard was I don't feel safe. I don't feel safe in my home. I don't feel safe in my community. I'm nervous of this; I'm nervous of that. They actually felt unsafe.

Now, that's like I say, to anyone in any of our districts throughout the province, that's pretty alarming to hear that from residents in your community that day in age; because, I guess, we were coming into that phase and we weren't into the shelters in place then. That was a pretty uncommon term. I don't even know if I knew the term back 10 years ago around here.

It was the beginning, I guess, of where we're to now. They were right in their concerns, and rightly so, and things have improved over extra policing and what have you and thankful for that, but now we've gone to another stage and we're at a different level now. This is not something you can just dismiss as not important; it is important, and it's quite serious.

When we ask the minister – I know our leader asked the Minister of Justice about the number of police officers. I don't know if we got a number on that. We're waiting for that number. But I'll tell you right now unless the number is not conducive to what they want to disclose – there was a time in my previous life, I worked with a minister of Justice and in their briefing binders on page 1 or page 2, those numbers were listed, how many police officers, how many correctional officers, how many sheriff's officers, how many RCMP officers, how much it cost. That was the basic information, the minister come in the House of Assembly prepared with. That was information that is not hard to find.

What I'm fearful of is that those numbers are not where they promised we want to be, because I've been told that the numbers are including cadets, new trainees. They're not out policing the streets. Those numbers will not help us this year. They might be in a year or two out before they help.

That's the concern I have and I think that we all should have that concern because, in this day and age, to be living in fear and to be nervous and you're talking to seniors and that's one of the common comments and they definitely never seen it in their lifetime. People who are in their 80s they've never seen it. Most don't know what to make of it. It's something that should concern all of us. I know it concerns us. It's why it's one of our main pillars in our platform. We really believe that that is a core issue facing the people of this province, facing the people of this country.

Sometimes we get caught up in a lot of other things, but that's the bread-and-butter stuff. That's what people are concerned about mostly. Everything else, yes, cost of living, health care and safety in communities, if you go that, you're in good shape. Because the saying goes if haven't got your health, you have nothing. So you get health care, the cost of living under control, you have a dollar in your pocket and the safe feeling that you can go out by your door and go for a walk and go out around your community and enjoy things, that's a pretty good life. Everything else is a bonus.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I have a few other fun stuff to do yet, but Fowlers Road and Manuels Irving are about a quarter of a kilometre apart and they're about 20 minutes maybe from the Health Sciences Centre. There was a shooting on Fowlers Road. There was a serious medical emergency at Manuels Irving this past Friday night.

The shooting on Fowlers Road, the father took the son and drove him to the hospital because no ambulance showed up. They sent an ambulance in from Whitbourne. He ended up having to take him with a police patrol and bring his son to the hospital.

At Chamberlains Irving or Manuels Irving – forgive me, there used to be two Irvings. It was Manuels and Chamberlains and one closed down. Anyway, Manuels Irving, there was a medical emergency. That person

waited over an hour. The manager of the store actually was in dealing with the staff person, got her husband down to watch the door to tell people they can't come in because there's a medical emergency on the floor – an hour. You don't understand, this is a busy business. I mean, this is a busy Irving. Incredible – an hour.

We hear stories of put on hold. Called in from a school there in St. John's, they were put on hold when they called 911. Our leader asked the Minister of Justice to get up and respond because he's responsible for 911, and he tried to give a tutorial on how a 911 system works. We all know the answer. No one in this House needs to listen to how 911 works. They need an ambulance. But first they need someone to speak to them so they can get that ambulance.

These are basic needs. This is not expecting the world. This is not expecting to be treated any differently than anyone else. This is life. This is health and safety is where we should be, but instead you get put on hold for 911 or you're waiting over an hour for an ambulance. Not good enough, never will be good enough. I won't sugar-coat it; it's not good.

Speaker, seniors is a subject I like to discuss a lot. I think it's very important. The aging demographic in our province is the highest per capita in the country. Right now it takes up – I can't remember the percentages, but I think we're in excess of probably 40 to 50 per cent of our population are 60 and above. We got an aging population.

Seniors' issues have to be at the forefront of every decision that's made. You've got your vulnerable sectors: You've got your youth and you've got your seniors. Everyone else in between is supposed to be the economic drivers. We're supposed to keep everything going. Because at one time, they did it too. It's the way our society works.

Well, you've got seniors that I think, for the most part – a lot of our seniors have, I think, fallen through the cracks. There was a

report that came out recently, a long-term care report. Not the AG, it was another report. I think it was a government-commissioned report. The seniors are falling through the cracks. Delays on assessments, home care – like, one of the big issues was delay in assessments. If you can't get a social worker to come in to do an assessment and find out the level of care you're at, you don't get past first base. You stay where you're to until it happens.

You've got a lot of seniors in their own homes that are waiting to get into long-term care or personal care homes. They can't go anywhere without this assessment. They're waiting an excess of – I'll get to that in a bit, in the report. It is an incredible amount of time they are waiting, let alone a reassessment. That's where everything stops.

So all those seniors who we should be very thankful for, they got us where we're to now today, they're looking for our help. I got a gentleman in my own district. He's living on his own. He don't want to be on his own. He's having trouble advocating for himself. Someone came to our office and advocated for him. This man is living by himself, we're trying to get through the system now and it's a challenge to get the assessment done.

He wants to go in a home. He don't know what's involved. He's afraid to stay by himself. He's terrified. He's still by himself, but we're working through the system. That's only because the goodwill of someone who actually knew this individual spoke to him and then approached us. We would never have known, and he would never had known where to go. That's unfortunate.

This man is well into his 80s. He wants to go somewhere where he's safe, he's warm, he's got a social network around him, live his life in, so-called, some peace. He's living in turmoil now, and it's really sad. But he's not alone. We have a lot of seniors in that same situation and it's very unfortunate. Again, it's nothing we should be proud of, but that's something that we should, I

suppose, take more – not pride, but take more pride in our responses to stuff.

I find sometimes it's a real bit of sport to kind of go shoot you down. We'll bring up issues and then government opposite will respond and dismiss what you say, or we don't know what we're talking about, or we're going off again. We don't make this stuff up. When we come in here and we stand in the House and we ask questions and we go in front of a camera or we go on Open Lines or we put out news releases, none of this is made up. None of this is conjured up. This is all real-life stuff.

As a matter of fact, we advocate – and I think we all advocate to the best of our abilities – for those people. There's something people need to realize. You won't see government publicly advocate because, in essence, you're going against your own government. No doubt, they'll do it quietly. We can try to do it quietly; it doesn't always work. So when you're in Opposition, you have to make noise. You have to speak up. If you don't speak up, you'll be ignored. You'll never get there. You'll never get any issues resolved.

Some people have often said, oh yeah, you're out complaining or you're doing this and you're doing that. The Opposition have to complain; that's on facts. That's the way it may appear but if Opposition went over and tried to do everything in a very civilized or a very calm manner and asked questions, the sad reality is, we would not get very much resolved. A lot of times it's bringing public attention to issues that forces government's hand on a lot of matters; not only just now, this has been going on for a long time. It's the way of this House.

Unfortunately, it's the way our Legislatures have operated. It's unfortunate. It really is but that's the way it is. No one will give the other one – no one will be seen as giving you the upper hand. They don't want to see you benefit, they don't want to see you seem like you're getting more than this one. You don't see you get a paved road and the Liberal district not. They don't see you get an urgent care centre because they want to

look after their own; because, oh, it's a benefit to be on the government side.

How many times do you hear that? Every election you'll hear it, and you'll hear it again this election. I've heard it every election and you'll probably hear it again on the federal side. That's not the way things should operate, but that's why a good Opposition, a strong Opposition, is very important. It's never been so – probably more now than ever, in this day and age, we need that and it's very important. No matter who's in power, you need to have an Opposition to keep your so-called feet to the fire and get the issues resolved, but you also have to advocate for the people you represent.

Speaker, some health stuff I'd like to talk about but, I think, I'd just like to – because a while back I talked about red was not cool anymore; remember that? I know you might recall that. Red wasn't cool. There were rumors that there were a lot of the Newfoundland Liberals that went into the Witness Protection Program; I don't know if there was any truth to that.

I could not find a Liberal. The signs were white, no more red. The word "Liberal" was missing. They were gone, nowhere to be found. You seen these white signs with the last name of the Premier, Liberal, but the Liberal was really tiny, but now like I said a while ago, Dad's gone; he left. In a couple of weeks time, they'll have a new man in charge. We know it's going to be a man – one of the Johns – but it will be someone in charge –

J. ABBOTT: The word is person.

B. PETTEN: The word is person, yes, but you are a man last time I checked.

Maybe you're not, John?

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: He wants to be premier, then. You need to move up closer to the front. He's trying to get over there across the way. Speaker, red is no longer cool.

P. PARSONS: Shameful.

B. PETTEN: The Member for Port de Grave likes to call out, shameful. Do you want me to tell you what's shameful, Speaker? Be careful what you wish for.

Do you know what I find shameful? I've sat in this House, several times now over the last while and I've abstained from responding, but there has been calls come across the way from the Member for Port de Grave making reference, and I can only assume it's to me and my Leader, to Trump and Poilievre. What's the endgame there? What's the goal there? This is out of the Liberal playbook. We are our own people. I am who I am. I represent the people of Conception Bay South and I have a name, and it's neither one of those names.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Our leader also has a name, and it's not Donald Trump.

This is the garbage that I've heard coming across the way. I heard it as recently as today or yesterday, I think, and even the Premier himself went to his dinner when all the people in that room are not the Liberals. There were a lot of Tories there too. They go because it's the Premier's dinner and that's what happens. When we're in government, there'll be Liberals coming to the Premier's dinner when we have one. It doesn't change.

Then you get down there, and the gall to get on this Trump rhetoric. This is what I've heard right across the country. It's right from the playbook because, provincially, the red colour was totally gone. They were Newfoundland Liberals. They were no longer associated with the federal Liberals. It was taboo. You didn't go nowhere near Trudeau and the Liberals; it was a no go. They were falling off like flies. There were people not running anymore; one after

another they were stepping down, stepping down. Then, lo and behold, Mr. Trudeau leaves and Mr. Carney comes in. Fair enough.

All of a sudden then, the fortune starts to change but, ironically, what the Conservatives were lobbying for – axe the tax – Mr. Carney did it. Actually, he was one of the architects behind the tax, which is really amusing because there he was, Trudeau's right-hand, advising him on –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, hopefully the Member for Mount Pearl North will follow me when I finish my speech and get up and give her 20-minute rant. When I'm done, I'd gladly sit down and listen to her but right now, I'm speaking. I think she should respect me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: Just continue on.

B. PETTEN: And the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, I will continue on, and thanks for joining us because I was wondering where you were all evening. Glad you're back here.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: To get back on track, Carney – and the Minister of Justice missed a few comments from earlier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker, for the protection.

So Mr. Carney comes on the scene; he happens to be the architect behind the carbon tax. He was one of the advisors to our Prime Minister Trudeau. He spent more time in the prime minister's office advising him on that – otherwise he was down around New York or England, wherever else he was to all over the world – but he comes back, and he knew he could not win with the carbon tax so he announces he's going to cancel the carbon tax – done. It's over with; only on consumers, not on industry, which that's another issue. The Conservatives have lobbied to have both of them removed.

Then, lo and behold they do a poll the other day – this is where I find things amusing and it's just as well to call it as it is. They did a poll the other day and they asked, who do you credit with getting rid of the carbon tax? It was 50-something per cent of the people said Carney. Which I found absolutely hilarious but it is what it is. I mean, that's 50 per cent of the people but it's totally amusing.

We've spent the last year or two, axe the tax, listening to the Conservative movement and there was no movement, almost brought the Liberals to their knees, until finally – finally – the saviour came back that orchestrated it, and he cancelled it. People can figure this confusion out if they want –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: People can figure out this confusion if they want and how they want; it's up to them but it is what it is. Those are the facts whether they like them or not. Obviously, they don't like the facts but those are the facts.

So back to the red. All of sudden, now, red is in. Every time I look there are Liberal MHAs, they're out with the candidates, they're in the pictures. Red is back – red is back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Now, I know there's got to be a sale – I'm not sure what they do with all the signs they've got. You know, all of the old white signs. I'm not sure where they're going to be used. I have no idea what their plan is for them old signs, but people love to do the inside of their sheds and cabins. There are lots of things you can do with those signs, and in today's world, our economy and everything, maybe they should take some signs and reuse them, repurpose them. I have no problem with that. That would be a smart thing to do because I'm sure they have a lot of them.

Turn them all over and paint them red, put the big –

AN HON. MEMBER: Recycle.

B. PETTEN: Recycle, yes. We believe in recycling. Paint them red, put the Liberal on it, save you a fortune. I mean, their government are all about supposed to be saving money. They're fiscally responsible. Borrowed an extra \$4 billion the year to put money in the savings account. Turn the signs over and paint them red and put Liberal on them. It makes a lot of sense.

But there are going to be a lot of them signs available, so I'm not sure what they're going to do with those. I guess the new leader is going to have to figure that way out but I tell you right now, we'll be blinded with red. Red is back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Part two of that, Speaker, as they clap –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Part two of that is integrity. They think it's funny, they're happy, but part two of that is integrity, Speaker. If they'd let me finish, I have a point to make on this one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The level of chatter is getting too high.

B. PETTEN: It's really too loud, Speaker.

I know they're a bit upset, that's fine, I get that, but part two is called integrity. I'll start off by saying, as a sport's fan – I'm a Bruins fan. Now, they're in the running to get the top pick, they're so far down in the standings. But guess what? I'm a Bruins fan. With one game left, I will always remain a Bruins fan and I got my Boston paraphernalia everywhere, it's on my phone, pictures, you name it. I have no shame; I'm a Bruins fan.

Part two of that is, I, along with my colleagues, are Tories and we believe in blue. We've never shied away from it. We've never been ashamed of our colour. We're blue. We're Tories. We've always been proud of that, contrary to what you hear, contrary to how bad they've tried to make it out to be. Even today in Question Period they still had to go back and mention – do you know what they mentioned again? Muskrat Falls.

I mean, the media actually started to make fun of them there a while back it was so overused. You've only been a government now 10 years and they still use Muskrat. The president of Hydro thinks it's a great project, but this crowd here thinks it's not so great.

We're not ashamed that we're Tories. We're not ashamed of who we are. Unlike the other side, you went from red, you went to white, now you're back to red. That can change; anything is possible. If everything comes bottom up on the 28th, Lord knows what colour it will be.

We don't know. We could be campaigning and see grey signs with the Liberal wrote on the back of them, I'm not sure. We have to wait until the 28th. But the Member for Mount Pearl North reminds us Poilievre – yes, he's running. He's the leader of the Conservative Party, and we are the Progressive Conservative Party.

B. DAVIS: (Inaudible.)

B. PETTEN: The Minister of Justice there is making his calls. I wish they'd get up and speak on the budget, Speaker. They're so energetic when I'm up speaking.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

That's enough chatter back and forth. It's hard to hear the Member speak.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thanks for the protection again, Speaker.

Obviously, by the response I'm getting on the other side, it's irritating them. Now, I didn't start out to try to irritate them. I'm having trouble hearing myself. I never started out trying to irritate them, Speaker. Obviously, Speaker, the truth hurts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

That's enough now. It's very difficult to hear. I understand Members are passionate about the issues. Please allow the Member to speak.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: So it all depends which colour John picks. When things go south on the 28th, we'll have to wait. But there's one thing I'll guarantee, the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, there will be lots of blue signs (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: And the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, he loves wearing blue. So much so, on budget day, my colleague from Terra Nova, who's not feeling well this week, but he made a very interesting point, and I'm sure he won't mind me saying this.

He said, Minister Coady is there doing her Budget Speech –

SPEAKER: No names.

B. PETTEN: Sorry, I apologize.

The Minister of Finance is doing her Budget Speech, and right behind her, the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune is in a nice blue suit. But I looked around over there and I noticed, the Minister of Justice has got a red tie on, and there were red jackets, like Mount Pearl North. All fine, no issue, that's what I expect.

As someone just pointed out to me, it's a bit of an identity crisis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Very good point. I think the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune is suffering an identity crisis. He's in blue again today.

But I know people are red, and they wear red proudly, and I'm okay with that. All I'm just making a point is that they went to white, but now they're gone back to red, and I don't know where they're going.

But the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune loves the colour blue. So when the election is called –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

B. PETTEN: I can't hear myself speak, Mr. Speaker.

The Member, he can get up after I'm done.

SPEAKER: Speak to the Chair.

B. PETTEN: Yes, I know, Speaker, but it's hard when you get this heckling across the way. But the Member will get that opportunity, I'm sure, to get up and speak, and speak about his district, like he should. Maybe he can enlighten the House and tell us why he wears blue so often.

But on budget day, of all days, to wear blue. I mean, we love the colour blue. But for him to be wearing blue, I don't think it's appropriate. I don't think his colleagues were too happy. I'm not sure if the Minister of Finance appreciated that on the backdrop, you know, when she's doing the Budget Speech and it's on the news and all you can see is buddy behind her with the blue coat on. Who's that? Who's the Tory sitting behind her.

So anyway, as much as they don't want to agree to it, we've established that they've accepted the Liberal branding again. Now they only had it gone for – how long was it gone? Was it gone a year? The first time they used the white signage – this bears repeating because I thought this was the most absurd. I've spoke about it before in the House and I keep continuing to speak about it. It was during a winter election. You drove down, it was snowbanks, and as you were driving by, you didn't even realize there was a sign unless there was a bit of sludge or salt upon it and then it struck you, oh yes, that's right. That's the candidate that was running for Conception Bay East - Bell Island. So that was what you do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Enough.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask Members for both sides of the House, please.

The Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you again, Speaker.

It gets kind of intense, but that's part of it. I mean, there are a lot of emotions. There are a lot of emotions because red and blue have clashed many times, and it will clash again. Well, it may clash.

Speaker, since they're out of the witness protection program, since they're all on board, I've got a –

P. PARSONS: Poilievre (inaudible).

B. PETTEN: The Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave is fixated on Poilievre – fixated. Obviously, I'm assuming, she must be supporting him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: She's fixated on Poilievre. I kid you not. People at home can't hear this. I'm telling you, I'm after hearing it at least half a dozen times since I recognized she was fixated on it, it's Poilievre – it's Poilievre. I mean, our leader is next to me and we're the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador and we have a leader. Mr. Poilievre is the leader for CPC, and he's running an election and last checked, he's doing quite well. They're neck and neck. But, I mean, that's fine.

She's fixated on it. I hope, maybe she goes and supports him. Maybe she can go and knock on a few doors when she's home on the weekend to help out the local candidate. I'm not sure. I have other plans for the weekend, but she can go campaigning if she so choose.

I'm sure they'll help and give her a few brochures and a blue jacket to haul on if she's that fixated on Poilievre, because I'm not. I'm more fixated on Conception Bay South and the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: – the issues that are important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, regardless of what the federal leader brings them. How about that? That's always been our position so your Poilievre comments, I guess you're fixated, but I'll let the local candidate know. We'll get the message to him. Maybe you should write your contact, you'd get to do a bit of door knocking. You may be helpful in the area – maybe not, who knows.

Now, Speaker, after that – I'm calming down now – maybe. I still hear some but not so bad.

Speaker, I want to go back and I want to touch on, in some of my time, health care. Something that I truly believe, I don't believe this government can actually defend. I've always said it. I think this government is vulnerable on health care. One of their major vulnerabilities is health care. I get sometimes with the cost of living, I get some arguments goes back and forth, and I know the Minister of Finance has made comments sometimes and not all wrong, but some of these things are out of your control. It's how you respond to those that's probably the better question, and that's sometimes with criticism.

When I look at health care, without getting into the weeds of every issue in health care, back in 2016, 2017 or 2018, around those times, we started seeing real problems – everyone always complained about health care; it was never to your liking – throughout the province. It became an issue that started to grow, started to get legs; it was moving on and we got to the point one day in the House, it was former Health critic – I can't remember which one of them it was – and the current Acting Minister of Health was the minister of the day and they said, do we have a health care crisis? Something to that effect.

I'll always remember it and, actually, before the question was ever asked, there was some commentary and discussion going on: Should you ask that question? Do you want to be alarmist and what have you? It was getting to the point then, that the issues were just starting to percolate. We knew what was coming.

We were dismissed and ridiculed. We were fear mongering; that's a common word we all hear. You can't ask nothing in here and you're fear mongering. No matter what we asked it was a fear monger. We were through all of it. *Hansard* will show you this. This is not me talking. You can go into *Hansard* and find this information. How dare you. How shameful, what you're getting on

with. You're putting the fear in people. It's unbelievable, and the minister of the day was downplaying this and what have you, but we continued on and continued on and continued on, and we still continue on fighting for improvements to health care.

You don't think we had a crisis when we were kind of being laughed out of the room then when we asked about a crisis and it was constant denial, until the current Premier and a former doctor – well, a current doctor, really – stood in his place one day in this House and acknowledged we have a crisis. I remember that day. We spent I don't know how long asking the question before we got, finally, acknowledged by the Premier that we did have a crisis. My question is, and it's a fair question too, just imagine if government and the minister of the day would have acknowledged – because it's more than the minister; it's a Cabinet – that we had a crisis when we started asking about it – just imagine that.

I stood in this House and I remember asking about the family doctors. We had a number, an equation done up, with what we figured was the adequate number at the time for family doctors. I believe it was in the 600 to 700 range. That's what they figured would be ample enough to our population. The minister stood in his place, again, and he gave me numbers, It was 640, 660, 670 and it was more than adequate, and dismissed me once again.

We know that we were short then, but a lot of those doctors were in MUN, they were not doing the practising, they were doing part-time. They were there on paper but they weren't doing the full practice. I call it the old-fashioned way, when doctors come in and work Monday to Friday and one night a week every second weekend. I had a doctor for most of my lifetime. That's what they did until they retired. Things have changed. Lifestyles change. People change, and that's their right. They went to school. They're doctors. I respect their decision. We just need more of them. The 650 figure was no longer accurate. We need a lot more.

When we asked that question – again, it's all in *Hansard* – it was dismissed. It was a very dismissive response back. It's almost like, yeah, you know, again – I say it's dismissive because it is. You get a response back and if you're not courageous enough to stand up, I suppose, to push back or to answer back, you could be left with that notion. I mean, I don't think anyone on this side ever gives in that easy because we will fight back, and on that one we did and the proof shows that's what we've argued for, we were right.

Travel nurses – we're waiting for the AG's report on travel nurses. I'm fearful – I shouldn't say fearful. I'm fully expecting it's going to be a pretty scathing report, much like the recent report that we've seen come out from the AG. If government got to learn something along the way, maybe the government has been in power a bit too long, you have to start respecting the AG and the reports. There's no good of doing a report, bringing the recommendations in and ignoring them. You saw it with the personal care home review.

This review was done and in 2015 the recommendations came in. The current acting minister was the minister of the day. The recommendations came in back then; in 2025, we know what we read in the report. It's not respecting the AG. I've spoken, probably, three or four times in the last month to the media on this. Government seemed to be ignoring the AG's recommendations. We had an MCP report that came out on the MCP billing and money missing. The government were aware of this but they neglected to do anything about it.

The AG is a pretty serious position in our province. An independent Officer of the House, and their job is to audit government to keep government on their toes to make sure our monies are being spent. We do it from a political point of view and call out and keep government accountable; ultimately, the Auditor General is the one that really, really, really puts it to paper. They should be respected.

When you see those reports come back one after another, and I said there's a trend – I believe it's a trend and, I tell you, you see this in time and you see this in all governments – as governments get in power for a very long time, they get complacent and complacency leads to neglect. Almost like you just pass over, you glaze over, you push off; it doesn't become as important anymore. What we're seeing now, that's exactly what happens to some of these issues because it's not easy to make tough decisions sometimes.

Sometimes it's easy to go and push that aside because you have other things you want to get done. You want to get out; you want to make this announcement and that announcement. You want to do whatever's good to the populist move, and that's part of politics, but you can never forget, you have to go back and clean up. When the Auditor General comes out, you should go back and try to fix the errors that they're referencing. It's incumbent upon you.

The Public Accounts Committee, one of the most powerful Committees in our Legislature, one that looks at our public spending, they work closely with the AG. The AG will then do these reports and they bring it back. The last report, I mean this personal care home report, they were frustrated, and I seen frustration in her face when she was announcing it. When the AG's frustrated with a government, it's time for government to start paying attention to what the AG is doing. I call it: It starts with respect.

I really, truly, and I say this with utmost respect to everyone here, don't think the AG and her office is getting the proper respect in this government when you have report after report after report coming in and being tabled with recommendations that have not been implemented, neglected to be done and we're finding out then, down the road, serious issues have been let go. And there's no reason other than absolute neglect by government.

Speaker, speaking to this personal care home report, this has gotten a fair bit of

airplay, a fair bit of commentary. I know myself that I've spoke on it and I know our leader spoke on it and I'm sure my colleagues have as well. How you can normalize and not make a lot of two deaths, a possible sexual abuse; residents cold, residents hungry, residents scared; medication error after medication error after medication error; feces on walls, on floors – it's kind of horrific. I have to tell you, it's horrific.

This is an area where I'm very comfortable because I know a lot of these individuals. I know a lot of these homes. I know a lot of the operators. I know a lot of the clients. I have 10, I think, community care homes in my district. Me and my colleague from Harbour Main, she also has some as well. We both share a lot of smaller, private personal care homes. I have one large and she has one large personal care homes in our districts – the more modern ones.

This is not acceptable. I have to say – not as a politician, forget that part because I always try to speak from me as a person and I think that's the best way for me to stay. When I heard that report on the radio – I happened to be listening to it on the radio driving – it gave me chills. It really did. Honest to God I said, wow. But I'll tell you what really, I suppose, irritated me and upset me – and it honestly did. It bothered me. I heard everyone talking about the report, but they weren't talking about what happened.

Can you imagine that being a family member of yours involved when they got a double dose of someone else's medication that caused their death? Think about that. Forget about anything else in that report. If one person got the wrong medication dose, twice, and they died – that's in the report. That's not me. That's in this report. I mean I got it noted in the book. Just think about that and separate everything else out of that report. That's appalling.

But then to seem like nobody were talking about that – every life matters. Every person in this province – no matter what you are or what your background is – your life matters.

You have to matter. Most of these are seniors. They've lived their life and they've contributed to our society. Then, for that to happen, and we're talking about bad communication or it's not my issue; I'm responsible for this one. I'm not going naming the people; they said it was in the media. We're responsible for that, but the department are responsible for these two.

What about that lady or that man that died because of the overdose, accidental, whatever the case is? What about them? What about the resident that was sexually abused, supposedly? What about them and their families? Serious issues, you know, when you talk about that. Think about that, sexual abuse – possible sexual abuse. Again, it's not me; it's here.

This is something that really gets my opinion of where I am. What about the resident that went walking for seven hours and no one checked on them, only to find them deceased? What about the resident that's in their room cold and hungry and afraid with feces on the wall? Do that matter? Really, does that matter?

I'm asking the questions and I plead with people because that should matter. If that doesn't matter, we have a serious problem in this province. We have a serious problem in how we protect our seniors in this province in our personal care homes.

We got some great personal care operators out there. Contrary to what some may think, because I've heard from some of them as well, and I had a not-so-kind exchange with one individual. The point they were missing was I was on the same page they were. They were caught up in the fact that their home was listed and there was no separation.

But like I told them, and I'll say it here on record in the House, I went on *Open Line* and the transcripts are there. I spoke to Mr. Daly on *Open Line* and I clearly stated it's not fair. All homes are not equal. There are great homes in our province that are operating and they should be credited. We should deal with the bad homes. I stand in

my place today and I'll continue to say that. If you're not operating up to scratch and you're not providing the care to seniors that they deserve, you should not be in operation.

This is non-compliant. You can't be non-compliant for 26 or 27 months with serious issues and stay operating a home. That's outrageous. There's a fall down – it's a massive responsibility issue here. I mean, for the AG to come out and be upset, you're right, I am upset. We all should be upset.

Anyway, this one home care owner that took it upon themselves and they weren't so kind and there was a lot of – I've got to be honest; it wasn't very pleasant. I'll challenge them if they're listening right now to go and listen to the transcripts, because I actually referenced that person on my call because I supported their issue. They were public about it.

I state it again here today: All homes are not equal. We got great homes delivering great service to the province. I got great homes in my district, and we all got great homes throughout the province and they deserve the credit and they deserve the support too from government, from all of us, to continue on doing what they're doing. But I'll go back again, those that are not doing the service, are not doing the job properly, they shouldn't be allowed to continue on. Then you're going to get into, well, what do we do? If we close down this home, this home, this home and this home, what do we do with all these seniors?

I'll give our leader credit for this comment, because I had this debate the other day, because it's not the first time I spoke about this issue. He was the one who pointed out to me, sure, if we had a fire or a tragedy or a flood, we'll always find locations for people. We always find places for people. If an emergency comes and the situation comes and a school closes down, you always find places for them children to go to school. You'll always find a way.

The ultimate issue here needs to be the protection of those seniors. The seniors

have to be protected. They have to live in a safe environment. It's incumbent. How you treat your seniors is an indication of our society. It's a real marker in society how you treat your seniors, how you treat your vulnerable individuals, your youth and your seniors. If you can't look after that end of it, God help us. It's nothing to be proud of.

When I spoke on it – and I haven't opened the book yet. I've had the book in my hand a dozen times to speak, but I think I know most of what's in it. But when I spoke on it, I think government should be ashamed but I think, society as a whole, we should be ashamed because people were aware of these issues. There were people who were aware of these issues. There are people who work in those homes that were aware of these issues. There are officials that have been aware of these issues, within NLHS, within the department, wherever, there are people who know about these issues.

For them to be left like they were and a document with nothing done about it – which I still can't get my head around it. For the AG to have to go in there and make this an issue, it's beyond appalling, Speaker. It's beyond appalling. It's an issue that I speak here and I'll continue to speak on it. I will not stop speaking on that issue. Ironically, everyone I speak to about it, they agree.

I know that the minister, we've had the debates and I'll leave it to the minister and I trust the minister that there are going to be actions taken, but I think there's one lesson should come out of this, that every life matters and no one should be dismissed because you're living in a seniors' home, or forgot about.

My mom went to a home and she needed to go. Her mind was fine; it was just her body, her hip, her mobility. She lost her licence. I spent a lot of time – I look after everything for my mother. I mean it's a big challenge. I have two sisters that are unable to do it, unfortunately, but I do it. She said to me, when we were talking, I can't stay here; I'm afraid. I've got to go. It was a really stressful, sad time actually, last fall. She said: I feel like you're locking me away.

Now, I'm old enough – I'm probably too old. I'm old enough to remember there was a time when seniors thought they were going to a home to die. They went to these homes, they thought that's the end of the road and you're going to a home to die.

I know that Dr. Parfrey was here last night at Estimates, and I thank him for that – I never had a chance to thank him last night but I will thank him for coming – and he made reference that long-term care now is moving away from that notion. If you're going in there, you can actually go in there and live somewhat of a productive life in a long-term care facility, as opposed to what used to be the stigma.

Personal care homes, also had that stigma. Even though they're Level I and Level II Care, they still had that stigma. That's a really sad statement to make of personal care homes in the province and for people to feel that way, but of course, that's not the way it is now. Anyone that's gone into those places will realize they're functioning seniors. They have their own transportation. They have entertainment. They have a life. They can go and do their things. They go shopping. There's no difference other than the fact they have someone to help them with the things they need help with.

Luckily, my mother has accepted it and she's enjoying things down there now, but that's where we need to really focus on our seniors. They should never be neglected and they should never feel that they're being neglected or just put away and forgotten about. We should all be thankful. I know the former minister of Health, during one of the debates on seniors – I can't remember. I know he spoke publicly and it was not long, probably, before he stepped down from it, and I'll give him credit for it, he thanked our seniors.

He was right; he thanked the seniors for what they've given to this province and where we are today. I've said it myself and I give credit where credit is due. When he said it, it was refreshing because he was the Minister of Health and he's on the

Government side and it was good to hear. I think we should never forget that.

There's one other thing on the personal care report that I want to mention. I mentioned this in Estimates last night and I just want to touch on it today to be on record. The forced evictions or the 90-some-odd people that they said were evicted, dropped off at the emergency rooms and left – the homes, they just dropped them off and left them. That sounded really, really bad in the report.

I have not spoken publicly on that. There were lots of areas of the report that I caught. I know the Leader of the Third Party has been on it a lot but I went down and actually met with a couple of the home owners in my district and had a conversation based on this report. Their concern was, they said: Yes, that happens and it's the last resort. We don't want to do that.

No home owner wants to do that, but they feel they have no choice. They feel that they're not being supported through the department. They have a business to run so if they have clients there that come in and their level of care increases, they're left to a situation of staff can't lift these residents anymore, they haven't got the equipment to deal with them and what have you. They're reaching out to the officials or whatever throughout the system – this resident needs to be transferred to long-term care.

They could be waiting for upwards to a year for these assessments or for these transfers. It gets to a point you can't have your staff all off on workers' or you can't have your home in total disruption because some other resident, unfortunately, progressed with other illnesses. That'll cause a major commotion. They feel they have no choice. They feel they're being forced into putting them out in emergency. They said this is a last resort, but they have no choice.

So that's an area where the system is failing, but unfortunately, when you read the report, it made it seem like these homes were being neglectful or they're dropping

them off. It seemed really cold. I mean it is what it is. The AG wrote that report but I don't think that was a fair characterization. I think the system is failing them and I understand these home owners, totally. I get exactly where they're coming from but I think they are very caring people. They are in a no-win situation with this and I want it to be on the record.

I know I spoke to the minister last night at Estimates and I wanted to say it again today to be on record here and answered in the House of Assembly, because I think that's an important point to point out. Contrary to one in particular, and on behalf of me and, I know, our caucus, we thank all the personal care home owners in this province that are looking after seniors properly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: They continue to provide the care they need. Our concern is the ones that are not and the ones that probably need that extra help to be able to do so. It's very important and the clock is ticking on this, Speaker. It's not something that we should just neglect and be here talking about this in a couple years time. We need to deal with it now because this issue is too important. I mean, seniors need to live in their homes, in a safe and peaceful environment. It's the least we can give them and, as a society, I think we owe them that.

My mouth's getting pretty dry now. On that note, I'll take my seat.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to rise today on this non-confidence amendment. Before I launch into the non-confidence amendment and what it contains, I would like to say to the Member opposite, I thought he was passionate about the personal care home

report, as I know the Minister of Health is, as I know all of us in this House of Assembly are, we're very concerned about what we've learned. I don't think it's everywhere but I do think we can do better, and when we can do better, we should do better.

So I know all of us, everyone in this House, is very much focused on that. I'll remind the Member opposite it was this government that increased the resources to the Auditor General's department –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: – increased the responsibilities of the Auditor General's department and gave more funding to the Auditor General.

I think all of those things are very important. Accountability is important and the concerns that have been raised in that report are troubling and worrisome and have to be addressed. I know that the Minister of Health and Community Services and all of government is seized with doing just that, as are the personal care homes, because as the Member opposite said, by far the majority of them are trying to do the very best they possibly can for our seniors.

I will say the budget provides – I can't remember the number so I better not say it – hundreds of millions of dollars to provide personal care supports and home supports to seniors. It is a very important piece of what seniors require as they age.

Now, Speaker, I will say that we've been presented with a non-confidence amendment and I was seized by some of the words that were in this non-confidence amendment. I'm watching the time because I know we have to be finished for Estimates, but I'll keep going for a while.

It talks about the failure to support, recruit and retain nurses, doctors and other health care professionals; now, that simply is not the facts. The facts are, we have increased the number of doctors. We've hired 140 new doctors in the last period of time. I said that in the Speech so I'm surprised the Member

opposite did not hear that. We have 1,133 new nursing professionals –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: – 760 which are registered nurses. The vacancy rate for nurses was 750, now it's down to 300. It's still a staggering number, but we continue to work on this.

How are we working on it? Well, in this budget, Speaker, there's a tremendous amount of investments. There's \$10 million for recruitment. There is \$2.4 million for settlement services for internationally educated. There's \$500,000 for nursing mentorship. We're increasing the number of seats at Memorial University's medical school. We've gone, in the very short period of time, from 60 seats to 84 seats for Newfoundland and Labrador students.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: That's a tremendous investment. We've doubled the number of nursing students – doubled them, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: We've increased the number of seats of Memorial University's nursing program. We've created new sites in rural communities and doubled the number of nurse practitioner seats to 40. That's directly in the Budget Speech.

Now, I know that some Members opposite want us to do specific recruitment. I know the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay has been quoted when he was a candidate in the by-election. He talked about recruiting from Germany versus some other jurisdictions, Speaker. I can say we recruit from all over and we put the money towards helping people to really settle in Newfoundland and Labrador, \$2.4 million. It's in this budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Now, Speaker, I heard the Member opposite, the Member for

Conception Bay South, talk about he's going to fault the Liberal government for its failure to support, recruit and retain nurses, doctors and other health care professionals. Well, I say to the Member opposite I'm going to fault the Opposition for not voting to support the initiatives to increase the number of nurses, doctors and other health care professionals.

We've put a tremendous amount of effort, a tremendous amount of financial resources and a tremendous amount of diligence around recruiting and educating and ensuring that doctors are here and nurses are here and other health care professionals.

I'll also note – I'm just watching the time, Speaker – that in the non-confidence amendment: "... its failure" – of the Liberal government – "to provide primary health care for all residents"

Well, Speaker, in this budget, as we have done in previous budgets, we have put a tremendous investment in Family Care Teams. Now, five years ago, there were no such thing as Family Care Teams in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Currently, we have 23. We've allocated, I think, some \$35 million for more. We have 23 already in the province; 75,000 people associated with those Family Care Teams.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Thank you, I agree.

When you talk about having access to primary health care for all residents, this is the type of work that we're doing. Again, I say to the Members opposite, if there's any fault here, it's their fault that they are not supporting those initiatives. These are solid budgetary initiatives that are driving success. Seventy-five thousand Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are now attached to Family Care Teams.

I'll also say, Speaker, before I hear it from the Opposition, oh, well, you might be training new nurses, you might be welcoming new nurses, but you're not giving

them jobs. Well, in the Budget Speech, again, if they were listening, 97 per cent of last year's nursing graduates were recruited to work in Newfoundland and Labrador – 97 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: In the non-confidence amendment put forward by the Progressive Conservatives in this House this afternoon, they talk about a failure to take the necessary steps to decrease crime in communities.

Now, Speaker, allow me to tell you what's in the budget. There's a tremendous amount of investment in this budget to do just that. We are very concerned about public safety and justice in this province. There's over \$20 million being invested to bolster new public safety initiatives. I have written it down in the back of this, so I use this rather than the book.

We spent \$180 million on policing services. We have \$20 million, as I said, for new public safety initiatives. We have a multi-year investment that's going to get us 25 new correctional officers, 18 new Crown attorneys, 14 new deputy sheriffs and a manager of court security. We've got money invested for a Joint Task Force Unit comprised of RNC and RCMP units to target weapon, drug and contraband enforcement.

Speaker, starting in '26-'27, we're adding an additional 19 police officers to ensure that we are strategically positioned to meet the evolving needs of our society. Again, I will say the only failure here is the failure on behalf of the Opposition to not vote in favour of these initiatives.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Speaker, the next point they raise is the failure to stimulate a robust, diversified economy. Well, it is surprising to hear in a non-confidence vote that we have – this is the language that they are putting forward: failure to stimulate a robust diversified economy. Speaker, this last year,

the highest nominal GDP, gross domestic product, in the province's history.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Newfoundland and Labrador, the highest gross domestic product in the province's history. How is that a failure?

The failure is not supporting the initiatives to continue to grow and develop our economy. Initiatives like: We're putting in \$90 million, \$30 million a year over the next three years, to stimulate and encourage more exploration offshore Newfoundland and Labrador. Progressive Conservatives are voting against that initiative.

We've got money allocated for critical mineral development. Members opposite are voting against those initiatives. We have money in this budget to help support the local restaurant industry and I can tell you, I can read out many, many, many accolades for this budget, but one of the strongest is from the restaurant association, who feel now they're being supported and recognized for the contributions they make to our economy.

I will say, Speaker, that in this budget in 2025-2026 – the one starting now in March to March of 2026 – the economists are now telling us again that we're going to have the highest increase in gross domestic product in the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: I implore Members opposite to read *The Economy*. I have a copy of it here if they don't have theirs. It talks about some of the growth and development that's continuing to occur in Newfoundland and Labrador despite the volatility and challenges that we're seeing globally. Our retail sales have grown incredibly strong in the past year and, on top of that growth, we're expecting in '25-'26 another 2 per cent.

Now, Speaker, I will say to you that when you're seeing numbers like the highest employment rate in the province's history,

when you're seeing the highest gross domestic product in the province's history, when you're seeing the highest retail sales in the province's history, you can certainly understand that we have a diversified, strong economy.

Now does everyone share in that? Does everybody share in the opportunities that this strong economy brings? Of course not. That's why, in this budget, as we have in last year's budget, we're providing opportunities and supports to ensure that we support families and support affordability in this province. So, again, we're seeing the Opposition in a non-confidence amendment say there's a failure to lower the cost of living in this province for seniors and families. I will be very happy to go on at length about the \$750 million we have put back in the pockets of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Speaker, I note the hour. I know that we have to move on to Estimates so I will, seconded by the Government House Leader, adjourn debate.

SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that will adjourn debate?

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 move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: Before I call for the motion, I'm just going to remind Members of the Resource Committee that we'll be debating

the Estimates of Environment and Climate Change at 6 p.m. here in the Chamber.

All those in favour of the motion that we do now adjourn?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House do now stand adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.