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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 10 a.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit visitors.

Government Business

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise today on a point of order. It was only upon review this morning – I actually went back and reviewed the tape – of yesterday's Question Period that I discovered or was told after the fact but I wanted to confirm myself, during Question Period yesterday, in debate between the Minister of Finance and the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay – and I quote from *Hansard* – the minister, after a question from my colleague, responded by saying, "Speaker, I know his mother would be ashamed of him," how ridiculous his comment or what have you was.

When I heard it repeated to me, and this is no joke, I'm totally being as sincere as I can, I went home last night and I started thinking: Just imagine if that lady is not alive, not with us now. I did not know.

Upon further investigation, the Member's mom is deceased. I personally felt it was distasteful and uncalled for. It was intended to be hurtful but the problem with it is this lady is no longer with us, which makes it that much more distasteful, just to make that comment in general about anybody's mother is crossing the line into personalities. It's very personal. We can debate here all day long but you need to keep clear of the personal attacks. If you do so you should apologize for personal attacks.

In my opinion, that attack, that comment, and there were other comments made as well, directed at the Member was meant to be hurtful. It was not a thought-out comment – it was not thought out. It was distasteful. It was not what should be coming out of this

House. It's not what you should expect from your Deputy Premier of this province. I think the Deputy Premier should stand in her place and apologize for that comment that was made to my colleague, the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, yesterday, during Question Period.

Thank you very much.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Often in the intensity of debate emotions do come out. I was quite concerned yesterday because I felt that there was a member of our civil service under attack. I will say to the Member opposite it was never my intent to personally hurt anyone. That's not in my personality. So I do withdraw that comment but I agree with the Member opposite, we should keep personalities and we should keep it to a higher level in this House.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: We're going to move into the budget debate of the amendment.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Thank you for the time again this morning as part of this budget debate to continue to talk about some of the things that are in this budget. I note when we left off yesterday afternoon, we were talking about a non-confidence amendment that the Members opposite had put forward – the Members of the Progressive Conservatives.

I'm going to continue on with the discussions we were having at the time as

part of the amendment to the Budget Speech on this non-confidence amendment. I will say, Speaker, we spent a fair amount of time yesterday speaking about colours, and the Member opposite for Conception Bay South was talking about red versus blue and he said red are back. So I took out my red jacket this morning and made sure that I followed through and, you know, here we are, red is back.

So I will say to the Member for Conception Bay South that the non-confidence amendment, it says – the budget and literally the Liberal Government – that basically the House faults the Liberal Government for failure to lower the cost of living in this province for seniors and families.

Now, Speaker, I think that's where I left off yesterday. I was talking about all the things that we have done to support families in this province and to support seniors in this province. I will say and I will remind Members of this House, that we have provided \$750 million back in the pockets of the people of this province and we're continuing to add to putting money back in people's pockets.

I will use an example, Speaker – as I get a drink. Sorry, my mouth is dry. I will remind the Members of the House that we have increased the Seniors' Benefit, that 50,000 seniors in our province – 50,000 seniors – it's a stipend that we provide during the year to assist with cost of living, to assist with affordability and we've increased that over the last number of years by 15 per cent. That's a big increase, Speaker, certainly outpacing what we think is inflation over the last couple of years.

I will say that we would always like to do more. In this budget, we are doing more. We've actually, for the first time, indexed both the amount that is received as well as the threshold by which you qualify for that to inflation to the cost of living. Very important; very called for. I can tell you that the Seniors' Advocate has been calling for that. So it's very important – we think it is – that we support our seniors in this province. It is

unfortunate that we understand the Progressive Conservatives will not be supporting the budget and will, therefore, not be supporting that initiative.

I can tell you that we also put in place, last year, a \$10 million Well-Being Plan for seniors to help with things like snow clearing and to help with things like mowing their grass. So seniors can now access a pot of funding to help them with those kinds of things so that they can remain in their houses longer.

We also provided, and I know that it's very important to the people of Labrador, a stipend for those who live on the Coast of Labrador. We provide them with a stipend to assist with the additional costs of living in these remote communities. That is something that I know we were able to get out the door right around – I think it was just before or around Christmastime – I can't remember when it went out but sometime in that time frame – and it's very important for the people who live in that region that do have extra expenses.

So providing those kinds of things to the people of Labrador was very important and I know that the Members opposite, again, didn't vote for those types of things because they didn't vote for the budget. They're failing to vote for the budget again this year so, therefore, they're not supporting the initiatives that I'm speaking of.

I will also say that we talked a little bit yesterday about the failure – again, quoting from the non-confidence amendment that the Member for Conception Bay South brought to the floor of the House of Assembly, said: This House faults the Liberal government for its failure to stimulate a robust diversified economy, and I reminded Members opposite that we have the highest nominal gross domestic product in the province's history. The highest gross domestic product in the province's history.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: I will also say that we have the highest employment rate in the province's

history; the highest retail sales in the province's history.

Now, Speaker, allow me to say some of the things that are included in this budget that will support industry, which I can tell you is very, very well received and well recognized by the business community. We've had accolades on this budget from the business community, from the restaurant association, from the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce, from the St. John's Board of Trade – I can keep going, Speaker – from the oil and gas industry, Energy NL, for example. They're very supportive of the initiatives that we're taking to continue to build and to continue to ensure that we have that robust and diversified economy.

In this particular budget, the budget that we're debating today, we have over \$35 million to support business and economic development. We have provided \$16.5 million to ensure that we work with our community and industry partners on connectivity. How important that is to everybody in this House? Very, very important. We're on track to achieve the objective set by the Universal Broadband Fund to have over 400 communities receive high-speed internet access by the end of 2027. That's imminent. I can tell you, the way time is passing so quickly, that will be upon us tomorrow and we'll be here in this House debating more.

I also say, in recognition of our restaurants and the contributions they make to our communities, all of us in almost every community in this province has a local restaurant, that they're very, very important. We are making available up to \$10 million for a restaurant loan guarantee program to assist locally owned restaurants. How important is that?

I can tell you the restaurant industry is very pleased to see that in this year's budget and thankful to see that in this year's budget. This also supports restaurants during a very particular period of time. Sometimes leading into the summer and leading into the tourist season it's a little bit of a downtime for the restaurant industry, so making sure that

they are supported. They also asked us during – I think it was during COVID, we last did something on the wholesale discount for bars, restaurants and lounges so we've doubled it from 5 per cent to 10 per cent. It's costing about \$1 million but, again, that is a very fragile, important industry that is getting some supports, getting some additional funding.

So if you're looking for a robust, diversified economy, those are the types of things that you do to make sure that you're able to grow your industry. Now all of this, of course, we're talking about tourism, today, because tourists do help to drive the restaurant industry and having a good restaurant seen in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador certainly is important. Having restaurants to support tourists – very, very important. We've also increased the tourism budget.

Imagine, we've increased the tourism budget? We want to attract more people. What an opportunity now in a period of global disruption; making sure that we bring more people to Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce them to, I'm going to say, the tranquility and peace that Newfoundland and Labrador enjoys. Let alone our culture and our incredible vistas and the restaurants that we have and the entertainment that we have, but the peace and prosperity, I think, is so important.

So we've increased the tourism budget. We increased the money that we put towards air access. Again, we have, for the first time, flights seven days a week going to Europe. I'd like to congratulate the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation for being able to attract three different flights: one going to Ireland, one going to the United Kingdom and one going to France. How wonderful is it going to be for us as travellers going overseas. We're looking at other expanded opportunities of other places to go visit but also for the people of Ireland and the United Kingdom and France and anywhere in the surrounding communities and surrounding countries to come visit us here in Newfoundland and

Labrador. Again, growing a strong, robust economy.

When you're talking about that, I'll also say we want to continue to encourage oil and gas development. So in this year's budget, we put forward a very important program to ensure we have a continued robust oil and gas industry. We want to continue to grow our opportunities offshore Newfoundland and Labrador. We have 650 leads and prospects offshore that could be developed. We just need the exploration, so we've put in place a program worth \$90 million, \$30 million for the next three years.

Now, that sounds like a lot of money, Speaker, I know that does, but I will say to you that to do exploration now, I don't know if my colleague is here, but it's roughly \$200 million. So that industry is spending a tremendous amount but the people of the province supporting them, they're likely to choose to come here versus some other place to do their oil and gas development.

So again, if you are truly sincere that you wanted "to stimulate a robust diversified economy," and I'm reading now from the non-confidence amendment, you would vote in favour of this budget but that's not what the Progressive Conservatives on the opposite side of the House are choosing to do.

Allow me to also say there's a tremendous amount of things that we, as a Furey government, as a Liberal government, have done over the last number of years to support the business community. We've also put in another million dollars for phase two of the natural gas resource assessment. We have natural gas offshore and we all talk about LNG in this House of Assembly across this country – making sure we develop it to lower our carbon impact to supply the world with energy.

Supporting the continued development of that opportunity and putting the million dollars in phase two of the natural gas resource assessment builds our inventory of proven and prospective gas resources. So think of it this way: This is an investment in

the future diversification and prosperity of our economy. It's in this year's budget that the Progressive Conservatives have decided to vote against.

Now, I will say, Speaker, I'm a little confused by the fact that they're saying that they want to – again, I'm quoting from their non-confidence amendment – stimulate a robust diversified economy and yet, they're not supporting these initiatives.

I'll also say that we have critical minerals. If you're listening to the news around the world today, you're hearing a lot about critical minerals. You're hearing a lot about them in the Ukraine. You're hearing a lot about them in Canada. You're hearing a lot about them from Greenland, because the United States does recognize how important critical minerals are, especially when you look at some of the green technology and the green industry. That's \$2.6 million, increasing to \$4.3 million next year, to support the implementation of the critical minerals strategy – an incredibly important as we move forward towards diversifying and increasing our mining activity in Newfoundland and Labrador, again, not being supported.

It's a little perplexing that we have a non-confidence amendment before us that talks about – I've already spoken at length about how much we're doing to recruit and retain nurses, doctors and other health care professionals. I've already spoken about how we're helping to ensure primary health care for all by making sure – for example, we already have 23 Family Care Teams with 75,000 people attached to them and we're expanding that. We're growing that. We're encouraging that. That also helps with recruitment and retention, but that's not being supported.

How we lowered the cost of living in this province for seniors and families. Just think about, for families alone, the child care investment. It's well over \$100 million that's being spent on our child care. So how important it is – how important it is – that we continue to do that, that we continue to expand and grow and invest in the child

care industry? I know the Minister of Education has been seized with this, understanding and knowing how important it is.

I would also say, I've talked about how we decrease crime in our communities and the fact that we're putting in more supports: adding new police officers, spending more money, ensuring that we have joint task forces between the RCMP and the RNC to make sure that we address the growing level of crime in our communities. This is very much a global problem but we're addressing it.

So, Speaker, I'll also say that they want it to stimulate a robust and diversified economy. I think I've spoken a little bit about what we've been doing here. That's on top of, for example, what we've been able to do with lowering the small business tax rate, raising the ceiling and ensuring that less businesses have to pay the Health and Post Secondary Education Tax.

We've introduced a 10 per cent Manufacturing and Processing Investment Tax Credit. We've introduced a Green Technology Tax Credit. We've introduced an All-Spend Film and Video Production Tax Credit. No wonder the business community is supportive of this government, Speaker, I say to you, because they are recognizing that we are building and growing a robust and diversified economy.

When I note the non-confidence amendment, when I go through it word for word, when I speak to all the issues that it contains, I have laid out, I think, a very factual, very cogent argument as to why the support should be there for this budget; why the support should be there for a diversified economy, for giving supports to lower the cost of living, to support the recruitment and retention of doctors and to support the primary health care for all residents.

I say to the Members opposite, I think that the resolution really does fault the Opposition for really not supporting the budget that provides the monies needed to achieve all that they're asking us to do. On

that note, Speaker, I take my seat. I know I still have time remaining but I'm anxious to get back to hearing and listening to other people debating the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a real honour to have the opportunity again today to speak on this important non-confidence amendment that has been proposed by the Official Opposition in the House of Assembly.

I'm not going to sugar-coat anything, unlike the Minister of Finance who seems to have sugar-coated the whole entire 2025 budget. What I find very interesting –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: What I find very interesting, Speaker, is the fact that there are many things omitted when we hear the Minister of Finance talk about *Budget 2025*. There seems to be omission and lack of attention to the problems that the people in this province are facing right now.

I referenced yesterday in my speech, the difficult times that our constituents and the people are experiencing in trying to access health care. I spent considerable time talking about the experiences of some of my constituents and others outside my district who are experiencing difficulties with accessing health care. As well, I spoke about the cost of living and it seems to me that the Liberals here have forgotten about the problems and the struggles that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are experiencing, the difficult times that people are having and struggling to make ends meet in our province and how they feel taxed to death and are leaving our province.

That seems to have been ignored when we hear the commentary from the Minister of Finance about *Budget 2025*. So now I have the honour as well to speak about some more very important issues – not more important than health care, not more important than the cost of living, because these are all very important issues that real people are facing today in our province – but when the Minister of Finance condemns us because we're not supporting and we have this non-confidence amendment, well, surely, we cannot accept a budget that is flawed and failed.

I mean, we would not be able to in good conscience support that and we fault, in our amendment –

AN HON. MEMBER: You want more roadwork, don't you?

SPEAKER: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – we fault the Liberal government.

Oh, I'm going to get to the roadwork. Don't worry, Minister, I'm going to get to that. I have lots of time. I'm looking forward to it too, Minister.

The Liberal government has failed in so many ways.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: They have failed, Speaker, and the people we hear from tell us about this failure every single day.

They talk about the fact that there's no support, and recruitment and retention of nurses and doctors and other health care professionals. We have heard from our constituents – and you don't want to hear this but you're going to hear it because these are the people that you represent as well. It's not just us. You're supposed to govern.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: You govern the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. You have the right to govern them so you have to listen to the concerns that we are bringing forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: These are legitimate concerns. You cannot dismiss these issues.

You're laughing, Sir. You're laughing, Minister. This is not funny. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador have serious concerns and we have the right to speak about that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So do not try to dismiss or gaslight here, please.

I have spoken about health care and real people who are hurting. I've spoken about the cost of living. Real people are hurting. Our Members over here who represent many districts throughout the province have talked about the experiences of people in our province. This is happening real time, Speaker.

So now I get the opportunity and I'd like to speak about another area that's very important, and that's with respect to Justice. I am the shadow minister, the critic responsible, for this important portfolio, and yesterday, when I talked about health care and the cost of living, I asked the question – and this is what all of our constituents have to ask after 10 years of Liberal government – has your health care improved? Access to health care, has it gotten any better? The cost of living, is it easier for you to make ends meet?

I bring that same question to the issue of Justice. We do know that *Budget 2025* has ignored the RCMP and their requests for additional police officers, and I point to the National Police Federation who submitted recommendations to the minister for 20

more RCMP police officers in the province. We know that there have been some police officers but these are old announcements, Speaker. There's nothing new forthcoming to assure the people who are fearful in their communities that crime is being adequately addressed.

I find it very interesting when the Minister of Finance spoke – if I heard correctly – but I can't believe I actually heard her say that there's a decrease in crime. If that is the case –

S. COADY: I never said that.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Well, my colleague and I thought that is what you said.

If that is the case we'd like to know where that decrease is and what *Budget 2025* has done to do that, but I don't –

S. COADY: No.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'm glad to hear that you didn't say that because that would be very surprising.

We know that is not the case, Speaker. In fact, crime has increased. The severity of crime has increased. The complexity of crime has increased. There's a higher level of complex crimes. We see repeatedly illicit, dangerous drugs that are increasing in all of our towns and communities. This is fact. This is not an attempt to exaggerate. I am reporting and I am communicating what I'm hearing and what I'm seeing.

We know that 34 per cent in RCMP areas that crime has increased in rural Newfoundland and Labrador so we are very concerned about that. We hear about violent attacks in our communities. We've heard of the violent attacks in schools. This is all documented. This is all recorded. This is happening today and it has been happening. We've heard about the shelters in place. I mean, these are serious issues which we need to acknowledge.

We do know that the police services in RCMP and RNC are stretched thin. Speaker, they're stretched thin. When we look at the RCMP and the RNC, the calls for service that they get are increasing all the time. That is a problem because it means that they cannot focus on core policing. They're not able to do the proactive crime prevention that's necessary.

I argue that this is why we have difficulty in supporting a budget that neglects and, really, essentially, ignores the concerns of our police forces and of the people that they represent. We need additional funding. Police require proper resourcing. They require proper resourcing to make our communities safer and they have failed to do that. There's a huge gap in rural areas. We know that police presence is not where it needs to be so that people feel safer. A lot of this is about perception. When people don't feel safe, this is a very serious problem and I would submit and argue that's what is happening today.

This budget, that has been sugar-coated by the Minister of Finance, does not address the needs for mobile mental health crisis responses. We need to see more of that. That will support the RCMP and the RNC. We know that last year, for example, out in the Conception Bay North area, which impacts the District of Harbour Main, we were promised a mobile health crisis unit. The former minister of Health, at the time of the budget last year, actually promised that directly and spoke to me personally, too, to assure that that would be happening. Well, guess what, a year later, did it happen?

Never happened, Speaker. It never happened; another promise broken. Yet, we know how important it is to have these mobile mental health crisis units because we have mental health professionals that then respond at the scene of these mental health calls. This is important. We see that the police are often tied up with taking mental health cases to St. John's. They're tied up and their limited resources are not then available to deal with the proactive policing that is necessary for the surveillance so that we can get at crime so

that we can actually prevent crime. That is what's happening. The police are urging us and government for more support and yet that has not happened in this budget.

This is another valid reason why we cannot support a budget that's failed and flawed like this. We cannot. It doesn't address the health care issues that are out there. It doesn't address the problems that people are experiencing accessing health care, for example. We cannot support a budget that does nothing in terms of cost of living to really put money back in people's pockets. The sugar tax is a perfect example. Why doesn't the minister scrap that tax and put money back in people's pockets immediately.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, as well, the final point I want to make in the area of Justice is that it's a revolving door. When we look at the HMP, it's a revolving door. When we look at the catch-and-release, because that's what it is, what we see in the plan by the Justice and Public Safety is not effective. It's unsuccessful. It doesn't hold people accountable for their crimes. It's not working. The entire system has so many issues with it that are not being addressed by this government. We see the same people day after day repeat offenders, recidivists, going round and round the revolving door and, basically, putting our society and public at risk.

Speaker, there are many options that we could propose. We need to advance, support and enhance the bail supervision program that's really not being utilized. It is important to have that option. There are many things that we feel need to be addressed that have not been in this budget.

I'm going to move on now with respect to an important issue in the District of Harbour Main and that has to do with the roadwork, as the minister just shouted out about over there. This issue with the roads in the District of Harbour Main – let me just say, since getting elected in 2019, I presented a

total of 22 road petitions. Today, I will be presenting another one and that will be number 23.

I have had five different Ministers of the Crown since 2019 that I have lobbied and talked to and, you know, tried to get support for the roads, specifically with respect to Holyrood out to part of Kelligrews. I can say that I did have and I'm thankful to the two ministers that did visit the district by my invitation to come and see first-hand. They did do that. The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, actually, was one of them – the first. The Member for St. John's East was another minister that did take the time to come out and see first-hand what was going on in the District of Harbour Main.

They know how bad these roads are and, I must say, I really appreciated the Member for Conception Bay South who talked in his budget speech about the concerns that we have. All of us have concerns, pretty much, over here about the roadwork in our districts and how we're fighting to get a scrap of roadwork done and that's what the Member for Conception Bay South said. He said, basically, we're fighting to get roadwork.

I mean, we're looking at in the District of Harbour Main. There are thousands of people who go on this highway, this road, Route 60 from Holyrood, yet we're begging for pavement year after year. Year after year begging for pavement and I'm at the point where I don't even understand how this decision is made. The allocation of roadwork, the process, Speaker, is definitely flawed because, as the Member for Conception Bay South said, we represent all the people in our district – PCs, Liberals, NDP, all of them – every person no matter what they represent or who they represent.

Government has that same responsibility. Government has that same responsibility to represent all of the people in the districts that they represent. Is this happening? Is this the reality that we're seeing in how this government has governed and how they've allocated pavement in the past 10 years? I would submit that the only conclusion that we can come to is that it's not a fair

process. I argue that it's not a fair process. I'm not sure what has to be done.

Why don't we have a fair process where the worst roads get attention?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The worst roads get paved first. It doesn't have to be complicated. Why is it that that's not happening? We're only asking for fairness here. No one will deny how bad this road is from Holyrood out to part of Kelligrews. It's probably, I would submit, the worst road in the District of Harbour Main. I mean, we hear this every day from our constituents about how bad these roads are.

Yet, I've been told that we do apparently, in the Roads Plan – what is stated is: Route 60 Conception Bay Highway paving sections near Topsail Beach and Holyrood. That's it. We don't know what that means. I've reached out to the minister, back and forth. I'm still as confused as I was on April the 3rd when this came out. I really have no definitive answer.

This is about transparency. It's about fairness. How they determine who gets the pavement, and my only conclusion is that it is political. That's what we all pretty much have concluded. It depends on what stripe you are, if you've got the red or white stripe – whichever stripe they're with today. Whatever stripe you are will determine what pavement you get, but, Speaker, that's not acceptable. That's an unfair process and, furthermore, we need transparency. I heard the Member for Ferryland say yesterday, in his petition, he doesn't know how many kilometres; he doesn't know where it's located.

I'm trying to find out, genuinely, for my constituents who are reaching out and saying are we getting pavement in Holyrood. We know it's near Topsail Beach and Holyrood. Surely, there has to be a better process than this. Surely, we should have transparency. This is the people's money. This is taxpayers' money. This should not be secretive. This should not be

secretive and it should be to at least to give the people some idea of what amount of roadway we are getting paved. I have no idea. Hopefully, it's going to address the serious and, I would argue, unsafe conditions that exist in this particular piece of Route 60.

On that note, Speaker, we are very concerned. These petitions that I've raised year after year, this is not me, These are the people of the District of Harbour Main. When I stand here, that is who I am asking these questions on behalf of. That's who I am advocating for and the government has a responsibility to address these serious issues with the roads, especially – and there are other areas – in the area of Holyrood to part of Kelligrews.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Gambin-Walsh): The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

It's a pleasure to speak again on *Budget 2025*. Before I get started, I just want to give a big shoutout to somebody that would be near and dear to all of us. Those are people that would be extremely overworked and, in my opinion, underpaid and that would be our constituency assistants that are in their offices every single day, doing the work –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: – doing the work that they do. It's absolutely phenomenal. The work that they do; the commitment that they put into it. I'm just so proud of Brenda, who works in my office, and I'm sure that everybody here is very proud of theirs. I don't know where we'd be without them and that's the honest-to-God truth.

As we get into budget here, the Finance Minister talks about the great things that they're doing, but one thing that I was very disappointed with in the budget – I spoke

about it before – was the Lionel Kelland Hospice and that's the fact that, this 2025 budget, there was no increase for the Lionel Kelland Hospice, our first and only community hospice in Newfoundland and Labrador.

They got the same amount of funding as they got last year and, as we know now, in January, they ran out of money. They ran out and had to get some bridge funding. We managed to get the bridge funding but, at that point, you would think that the work that went into the budget, they would have been able to find some more money there. Unfortunately, it wasn't there. I hope that we come up with it because that's the hill I'm going to die on. That place isn't going to go anywhere, I can promise you that.

I spoke about this before but I need to bring it up again, and I know the minister is listening here today, and that would be the woodcutting permits throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, especially in Central. We, again, have had generations, a century of woodcutting in Central Newfoundland and Labrador. When the mill shut down in Grand Falls-Windsor years ago, we still had wood out there and, in my mind, we could have definitely done some sort of secondary processing plant, but unfortunately we didn't.

We still have many processors out there. We have many harvesters out there, many small harvesters, that have been doing this forever. A couple of them: of course, John Shearing in Grand Falls-Windsor has been cutting wood. The man is 67 years old now. He still tries to cut, but he's been cutting wood since he's been six years old. This is the first time in the history of his life where he couldn't get a wood permit. That's shameful. That's absolutely shameful. That man grew up in Grand Falls-Windsor and spent his entire lifetime in the woods right where he belongs and right where he loves it.

Another one, up towards the Buchans area, of course, is Jonathan Brown. Jonathan Brown is a second-generation woodcutter; his dad did it. He is First Nations; he's

Aboriginal, and he was only too proud to cut wood his whole life. I talked to him yesterday; he reached out to me. He is officially out of wood so his small enterprise of eight or 10 people that have been around his entire lifetime, if he doesn't get wood in the next couple of months, he has to fold and probably leave the province – probably leave the province.

Do you know what? In Newfoundland and Labrador, where we have just over 500,000 people, we have a lot of forest. The fact that the department can't find a way to ensure that these smaller enterprises that have been around for a dog's age cannot get wood, it's shameful and it's not right. It's a sin. There has to be a way with these huge allotments that we have for the bigger companies that come in – and again, this is not to downgrade any of the larger enterprises, of course, because we want free enterprise in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm happy that we have these bigger successful companies, but they should not be able to take away from those smaller companies that are trying to make a living that live right in the Central area as well. I can guarantee you, when we get in government, I will be changing that. I will be changing that and that's a promise.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Yup.

I spoke to our leader of course, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, and without hesitation he said that he would be there for the people of Central so I really, really appreciate that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: If I can move on for a moment to a bit of a lighter topic, when you drive across the Island, you come towards Bellevue and there's a rock that everybody sees on the right-hand side. That rock has Corey and Trina on it. A lot of people think that it's Corey and Trina, the wonderful musicians that we've had here, the

entertainers from Newfoundland and Labrador. In fact, it's not.

There was a *Land and Sea* special about it last year, and I'll tell you the story: Corey and Trina Sharpe, from Grand Falls-Windsor, their dad was taking their daughter to school back in 1994. They got out, they had a can of paint and paintbrush in the back and she wanted to do a little bit of something there for her brother and that's what she did. She painted Corey and Trina on that rock in 1994. So what is that, 31 years ago. Absolutely phenomenal.

I talked to Corey yesterday and he's afraid that when the divided highway comes in, that rock that's a pinnacle for everybody seeing it or whatever – it's sort of a monument at this point – is going to be taken out. I assured him that I'll talk to the minister, I'll talk to the minister's department and if that rock is to be taken out, I'm hoping that we can get it put somewhere else so, again, everybody can see it and they can keep that memory alive. That's something that they enjoy. I promised Corey that I would talk to the minister, and I certainly will, about that because we'd like to keep it there.

The *Land and Sea* special, they brought Corey and Trina together with Corey Crewe and it was quite the moment for him. Anyway, it means a lot to Corey and Trina from Grand Falls-Windsor and I'm going to be sure that we talk to the department and see what other circumstances we can get for that rock right there.

We'll move on to crime in Central. Of course, crime is up all over the province. It is and, unfortunately, that's the day and age that we live in. It can be attributed to drugs and a lot of it can come back to drugs sort of thing. We have a huge drug epidemic here in Newfoundland and Labrador. In Grand Falls-Windsor, of course, we are not immune to that.

In Grand Falls-Windsor just last weekend, we had a shelter-in-place of an active shooter. It's not something that you see very often but you do see it and, again, it comes

back to drugs. I've known some of the people that may have been involved and it wasn't great to see, because, again, we're only as strong as the weakest people within our communities or the most vulnerable.

I appreciate the Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers we have in Grand Falls-Windsor. They do a phenomenal job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Some of them are actually from Grand Falls-Windsor. We're happy to have them there but something that plagued me for years and years, long before I was a politician, and I don't know if I mentioned it to the minister but I definitely will at some point, is the RNC, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.

It's fantastic we have them in St. John's, Corner Brook and Labrador City, as far as I know. Why aren't they in Central? I would like to talk to the minister some day about, down the road, why don't we have RNC, Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, officers in Central, in Grand Falls-Windsor and possibly Gander, and get some more boots on the ground.

Maybe there's a reason why they're not. I'm not sure but I would like to see more officers, obviously, in Grand Falls-Windsor. We have our municipal police in Grand Falls-Windsor, of course. They're absolutely phenomenal. They're locals. They do a great job for what they have to do and we're pleased to have them there.

I spoke about the divided highway, yesterday, in Grand Falls-Windsor. Again, it's a huge topic in Grand Falls-Windsor and a lot of the comments that I get back, and I want to address this now, are we need drivers to pay more attention on the road – 100 per cent. I mean, that could be anywhere in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's fine enough to say but, of course, we're all human and we make mistakes. So for somebody to come and say we need to pay more attention, that's not a fix. I'll tell you why that's not a fix: At any given time,

you could be driving the absolute perfect conditions through Grand Falls-Windsor at 90 kilometres an hour, hands at 10 and 2, and if you're coming around the turn there by the cemetery or by the hospital and somebody else is in that lane, doesn't matter how much attention you're paying, the other driver may hit you and, unfortunately, that's the reality of it.

I just spoke with the minister again, and his department has just reached out to me, maybe, 10 minutes ago, so I'm going to meet with them, I think, at some point today and we're going to get that done. It took a long time. It took too long to get it done but to the minister's credit, he's the first out of three or four ministers over there to actually get some action on this. I thank you very much for that, Minister. It's much appreciated.

My critic role, of course, is fire and emergency services. We thank all the firefighters across the province. I was very fortunate to do it throughout a portion of my life, and I really, really enjoyed it but the fact now is, with the absence of ambulances within rural Newfoundland and Labrador, these firefighters have to take on the calls. That's fine and dandy. I'm sure that they're only too happy to do it but they shouldn't have to pay the price to do it.

We talked about compensation, whether it be equipment, fuel and all these things, there needs to be a model landed on here to get them some sort of compensation if they're going to be doing these medical calls.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, it's all hands on deck. Anybody would help anybody else but we want to make sure that they're prepared to do it. They have the right equipment and they can do this because if it's something that we're going to rely on, let's come up with a model where we can rely on it and they can get compensated because it's not fair to them, it's not fair to the municipalities that may be having to foot some of these bills and that's something, hopefully, that the department

looks into. I wouldn't mind helping with that as well.

It's been said many times before, we talk about seniors throughout our communities and we talk about that they're supposed to be in their golden years. Well, it doesn't feel like the golden years for the seniors and, unfortunately, again, that's the reality that we live in. The seniors have to try and make it through, cheque to cheque sort of thing, with that little bit that they have coming in.

The soaring food prices are phenomenal. I mean, seniors have to eat. Forget about just trying to eat healthy, they just have to try to eat. It's so expensive. Yes, it's expensive to eat healthy, but it's expensive to eat terrible as well. Unfortunately, that's where seniors are today and we have to try to help the seniors as much as we possibly can.

If you think about the different bills that seniors have today that they didn't have years ago. You have to buy a new cellphone – every person on this planet needs a cell phone at some point, they need a cellphone plan and whether you're a parent trying to get them for your kids, it's not something that you had 20 years ago but it's needed now. That's the world that we live in now. It's the same thing with the oil and gas. Oil and gas built up this world to be reliant on it. Well, now we have to rely on cellphones.

So a senior living in their home, they have certain bills that they have that they may not have had 20 years ago. That cuts into the little bit of money they get so as these bills continue to soar, the money they have coming in stays pretty stagnant with small increments. Again, I think that we promised – what – 20 per cent of an increase? That's something that we need to look at moving forward for seniors as well.

When you see the seniors at the grocery store of course – my God, it's a sin. You don't see many happy seniors anymore. You just don't because you can see that they're struggling and you feel that struggle every single time. God bless any kids out there or any grandkids that are helping their

moms, that are helping their grandparents. It's not easy on them either but they're still doing it, whether it be financially or just being there for them to help out. Thank you very much to anybody out there that's helping a senior.

Of course, on the other end of that, we've got young people. We've got these young men and women that are growing up through high school, graduating high school and going to university and graduating university and college, and those that may not be going to college or university but are finding themselves and that's okay, too.

I've got two sons; Declan just turned 20 and Xander is 17. Being a dad, it's exciting to watch them succeed. It's exciting to watch them fail because that's where real growth happens. It's exciting to watch them take on a world that was different than when I took it on. The challenges that are in the world today for young people. They aren't more, they aren't less but they are different. They are certainly different.

The financial struggles that they have today, I think, are much more pressure on young people than they were when I was growing up. You know, you watch the kids come out and you're going to go out and buy a new vehicle, new vehicles today are \$35,000, \$40,000. I mean, you're not going to go out and buy a new vehicle just coming out of college with the debt that you may have. You're going to rent a place in St. John's – \$2,000 or \$2,500 a month to rent a place. It just doesn't keep up.

To think about our young people, our young men and women out there who are ready to take on the world, you can imagine the amount of stress that's on their shoulders. The amount of uncertainty that's on their shoulders. They would expect government – and I've always said government is not here to save anybody; that's not government's role. Government's role should be to work hard and provide an environment that people can flourish in.

That's as simple as I can put it. It's government's role to provide the

environment for people to have the opportunity to flourish. I want to see my children flourish just like all children across Newfoundland and Labrador. I want to keep them home as much as I can, as many of them as I possibly can, but it's tough. It's very, very tough on young people today. I don't envy them but I am there to support them and I will continue to support them, just like all of us will, because we want them here.

We talk about the mental health. Whether it be with seniors or young people, the mental health epidemic we have today is unreal. It's a huge contribution to the drug or alcohol problem that may be out there. Looking at it myself – I'm just trying to step back and take a look at it – I think that the reason there is so much depression or anxieties out there is, again, the uncertainty.

I mean, when I was growing up, you were given the notion of the harder you work, the further you were going to get ahead. That's plain and simple. It was pretty much, the harder you work, the further you were going to get ahead. I've always been about hard work. I've never been given a thing in my life. I've worked for everything I've ever had, but it gets frustrating for people to take that notion on and to see it through. When that light at the end of the tunnel gets smaller and smaller as things skyrocket and things get harder, well, my God people are giving up. People are giving up, but I ask you not to give up.

Again, I'm the least materialistic person I've ever met in my entire life. I made a little home for myself on the corner of Newhook and Knight Street in Grand Falls-Windsor. It's a very modest house and it's got chew marks in the staircase where the dog did it and everything else. It's my home and I filled it with my beautiful wife and best friend, my two children and my dog, and at the end of the day, you can get frustrated and there's lots there to get frustrated about but I have a roof over my head. I have people around me I love and love me back. I have food in my belly and, by God, at the end of the day, if you have that, you're

doing better than most, you truly are, in this world.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Yeah.

It's great to have the ambition to want more and that's fine, but don't get caught down in the bog. My son's favourite saying, I told him this when he was a little boy: Everything will be okay in the end and if it's not okay, it's not the end so just hang on. My two sons grew up with that and it served them well, just as it served me my whole life.

So to all of you out there, we're going to continue to work as hard as we possibly can to create that environment where you can flourish, but again, if you have love, if you have laughter, if you have shelter and you have food, you're doing better than most people on this planet. Take a moment and show just a little bit of gratitude just for yourself, not anybody else, just feel a little bit of gratitude and it might get you through those hard days as well; because, like I say, the mental health pandemic here in Newfoundland and Labrador, it's real. It's so real and it affects everything in your life: it affects your work life, it affects your relationships, it affects your day-to-day activities.

I'm going to stick with mental health for a little bit. My mom, little while ago called and she was having a hard day. She was having a bad day and she said, Chris, all the stuff that's going on in the world, this and that, I can't get away from it. It's got me down, here today. I'll give everybody out there the same advice that I gave her for that day, I said: Mom, turn off your TV, my love, put down your phone and go outside because, you know what, when you're walking and there's sunshine on your face, those problems don't exist for an hour or so. That's what some people need sometimes.

That'll be my advice to anybody out there: put down the phone, turn off your TV and get out because you can get bogged down. It can really take a lot of people down and I

think that's the effect that it's having here lately.

The poverty we have within Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada and throughout, it's hurting a lot of people. The food insecurity of course, I can't imagine going hungry. It's terrible but it's real. It's really out there. The housing: when we were growing up, it really wasn't a thing – not that we really noticed anyway – but nowadays, you have families and a lot more people. You don't have to be out in the street to not have housing. If you're couch surfing, if you're staying with somebody else, that's inadequate housing and, unfortunately, we see more and more of that today than ever.

There's another thing, I don't know if people really bring up a lot, the cars on the road, the vehicles on the road. People can't afford things like they used to so if you have a decision between food, your mortgage or new tires, the tires are at the back of the list.

This is not to come down on anyone but I truly believe we have a lot of cars on the road today that are inadequate – that aren't up to par for safety standards. That's sad and, again, it's not a knock on the people that are doing it because I realize the struggles that you are in but it could cause a wreck on our roads or cause an accident and, once again, to no fault of their own. I get it. I get it but that's something that we need to be aware of and be prepared to talk about.

Anyway, I see my time is coming to an end, Madam Speaker. I just want to say to everybody in Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans District and everybody across Newfoundland and Labrador, I want you to have a very safe and Happy Easter weekend coming up. Take that time and spend it with your family and let's all be grateful for what we have as we strive for more.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm glad to be able to stand here once again and start off my comments on the budget by thanking the people of the District of Stephenville - Port au Port who have given me the honour to represent them in this House of Assembly. It's something that I do not take lightly and I certainly know there are lots of issues and lots of challenges.

It is always a pleasure to speak with people in my district and in other districts across this province and talk to them about their concerns and the things that they would like to see us move ahead with and that's what a budget is always about. When we review the budget, we always look to see what's in there that is actually going to make a huge difference for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Before I start my comments on the budget today, I want to reference the Budget Speech and a comment that the minister made in her opening remarks in the Budget Speech. That comment was something along the lines of, and I apologize if I don't have it 100 per cent accurate, welcoming the PC Party here to listen to the budget.

I believe that was a reference to the fact that last year we did not sit here in the House of Assembly and listen to the Budget Speech. We stood with the fish harvesters and plant workers and others in the fishing industry –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: – who were protesting because of the challenges they were facing in their industry. I will say, I will never apologize for standing up for the people that work in the fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador because they are the ones that are the backbone of this province of ours and it certainly impacts all of us in this House of Assembly. That's why I'm glad to see that the crab processors, the crab fisherpeople and others, the plant workers,

are actually on the water and processing crab. I think we all agree. We're all happy to see that that's happening.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Having said that, I also think about the fact that the harvesters in 3K saw a significant cut to their quotas this year by 25 per cent, and they talk about it being based on science. I would argue there's more to science than a bunch of people sitting at a desk in Ottawa making decisions or doing these things. They talk about two different ways that they did this, the pot surveys and the net surveys, yet, right now, we are hearing from harvesters in 3K that their pots are full.

So when I think about that and I think about all the people that are involved in the science, I think who are most likely to be the best scientists when it comes to determining whether or not a stock is healthy? I would argue that it's not the people sitting at the desks. It's the people in the wheelhouses of all those fishing vessels that are on the water every single day harvesting. They should have a lot more input into how decisions are being made when it affects our industry, because it is our industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: So, Speaker, I want to start off again today referencing Question Period from yesterday, and I want to start off by saying, to set the record straight, that all of us in this House of Assembly, I believe, value all of the work that is done by our public servants in our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Without their support, things wouldn't happen. We wouldn't get our jobs done. So I want to say that out loud, but the reference yesterday, to the seven years of an acting position in the Public Service Commission, was brought up by my Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay. I want to go back to the Estimates of April 11, 2022, and why we're concerned about it.

The Estimates of April 11, 2022, I was at that Estimates, as the minister alluded to yesterday, and I asked questions about this particular position and why it was still acting. We got great answers, so if I could just quote from those answers: I asked the question, “So am I to understand that the position is actually now being advertised and it's before the Independent Appointments Commission?”

The answer from the Acting Commissioner was, “My understanding is that the position has been advertised. It has been recruited for. There have been interviews. There has been a report generated by the Independent Appointments Commission, and that report has been submitted to government in accordance with the act.” That was 2022. Today, in 2025, the person is still acting.

Maybe we'll ask a question in the House later today about what happened because, clearly, in 2022, from the Estimates, the position had been advertised and all the process had taken place and a decision was imminent.

Then, I went on to thank Mr. Joyce and I said, “I'm not going to ask you if you applied or not, but I want to thank you for the work you've done for the last three years in an acting capacity. Pretty soon you'll be ready to step up to the next career in acting but I want to thank you for – it's a difficult challenge to fill something on an acting basis for such a long time ... and I'm glad to hear that the position has been posted.”

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: So, again, we'll come back to that in Question Period and see if we can get an answer as to what happened between 2022. The position was posted, recommendations made and nothing has been done, and it's now 2025. It's such an important position for the Public Service Commission. This is a significant position and it needs to be filled. That's why I want to go back to that.

We've heard a lot of my colleagues talk about roads in their speeches so far. It

reminds me of the old days, which I thought were long past us, when you knew an election was happening when the paving machine was rolling down your street. Now it appears it's a similar process. When I think about – excuse me for one second. When I think about my daughter, she lives in England where they drive on the left side of the road, I can tell you that the people in my district drive on what's left of the roads.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: That's what's happening and it's common.

We're hearing a common theme here from all of the people on this side of the House about the challenges with roadwork and yet, we've also heard the comments that there has been five Transportation ministers over there. It's interesting to hear them debate among themselves as to who got the most pavement in their own districts while they were the ministers of Transportation, and it shows. I mean, all we have to do is go back and look at where the actual paving work was done, but there is a desperate need for road repairs in the District of Stephenville - Port au Port.

I'm happy to say that we got one allocation for a road despite the entire route that's over there – and I should point out that we often talk about the Irish Loop. I would also suggest that all of us, or all of you if you haven't visited so far, should come to the West Coast and take a run around Route 460, which is not only an historic route. It's the Indigenous culture that's there. It's the French culture that's there and the French festivals that are there. It's a beautiful ride right around the whole entire area. Beautiful scenery, beautiful people, beautiful festivals and, unfortunately, the only thing I can say that's not beautiful is our roads.

If you are travelling, or plan on travelling and coming out this summer, then I welcome you by all means, but make sure you have a spare tire in your vehicle or one of those inflatable cans that you can blow it up if you need to because there continues to be a number of people who have reached

out to my office and talked about their flat tires that they've incurred. I've driven around that and there are significant potholes in that road that need to be repaired – significant challenges with even the sides of the roads.

In a community in Three Rock Cove, there's a part of the road that's completely destroyed because the water builds up there constantly and it causes all kinds of challenges, especially, in the winter. There are things that need to be done. Maintenance is not just about putting a new surface on the roads, there's a lot of maintenance that needs to be done and that's part of the challenge. We find and hear that there are challenges with the equipment that the workers have to use and we are hearing lots of challenges with the number of workers that are actually available to do the work. All of those things are very important.

A little bit of tongue in cheek, there is something in the plan here called: Slope stabilization Fox Island River and Paving Section of Fox Island River. It's Route 462 but on the heading it's called Mattis Point Road. So I'm wondering if the reason I got it is because they thought it was in a Liberal district; because Mattis Point Road is in a Liberal district. It's actually Point Au Mal Road that they're referring to but I'm looking forward to the work being done on the Fox Island River.

I want to speak about the Fox Island River road because this is a road that runs parallel to the ocean and it's a road that I would suggest, over the last 15 years, we get storm surges every time and the road gets washed out. Then what do we do? We come in; Transportation and Infrastructure comes in and they turned around and cleared the debris off the road and we put some small stones back over again and we fix it so it's good to go. Then, we repeat the following year, and then we repeat and repeat and repeat.

I've heard my colleague from Ferryland talk about the breakwater down his way and that's what we get into. It's a repeat cycle

where we wind up, over the course of a number of years, actually spending more money on repairs. If we had to address the issue and get it fixed properly the first time, we wouldn't have that challenge. I think of the Speaker's own district, where I grew up, in Placentia. What a wonderful job they did out there in stabilizing Beach Road and the beautiful boardwalk that sits on top of that now. It's become an attraction where people want to walk on that every day.

There is the potential for that same type of thing to be done in Fox Island River but what we have to do is not simply go out and spend all this money on repairing this road. Let's make sure we do it right and listen to the people who live in the district. Listen to the people who live in Fox Island River and what they're suggesting on how we can get this repaired so we won't be talking about this every single year. It's not about having to move the road over or anything like that, they have solutions, but the solutions mean that we have to take our time and do it right.

We're about to spend another bunch of money on stabilizing that road and I'm glad to see that in the budget, but I want to make sure that it's not simply a repeat of everything we've done in the past. We continue to do that. Let's make it so that when we do these repairs this time, that we put the right armour stone down there, that we listen to the people of the community and we get it done right, because that's what's important here.

I also want to talk briefly, when I talk about roads – we talked about erosion. Good Friday is this week. A year ago, on Good Friday, there was a significant rainfall – a storm. Part of that storm damaged property, roads and others in the Town of Cape St. George significantly. One house has actually been torn down because it was destroyed by that and there has been no assistance.

I stood in this House of Assembly on two different occasions and asked the Premier for assistance for the Town of Cape St. George to deal with the challenges that the people in that particular town were having.

Twice the Premier committed to ensuring that his government would be there for the people in that community; to date, there has been no commitment made. There has been no funding. That commitment has not been honoured and that needs to be done. I get calls constantly from people in that community asking when is it coming? When can we expect it? It's still not here. There's still no response.

Maybe it doesn't fit under a federal program or anything like that, but when we make commitments in this House of Assembly that we are going to help people, we ought to follow through on them. All people think and want is somebody to say, yes, you said that you were going to do it and, yes, you will do it and that's all they're asking for. So I hope that before the Premier leaves that commitment will get honoured and that promise will be made.

I also want to talk a little bit about other erosion. The community of Mainland is a beautiful scenic community along the coast that I just talked about. A lot of French ancestry; an all-French school there and on the side facing the road, I think of a gentleman, Mr. Oliver, who has a house that he built on that side of the road 30-plus years ago, maybe. At one time he could play soccer in his backyard. Now if he steps off his deck, he'll fall into the ocean. That's how much coastal erosion has impacted his property and yet, we can't find no way to help that man.

At the same time, I think about the other buildings along that strip. When I think of the Tea by the Sea building, the historic schoolhouse and the other historical buildings that the Mainland historical association has put so much time and effort into developing and commemorating their history and I watch as those banks erode year over year, we do not want to find ourselves in the situation as what happened in Daniel's Harbour. We cannot wait for the properties to fall into the ocean before we actually decide that we're going to do something about them.

So, again, that's something that we need somebody from Transportation and Infrastructure or engineers or someone to go down, take a serious look at this and figure out how are we going to get this done. Those are issues that are impacting people right now in my district that need to be looked after. That's another case.

When I speak of Mainland and Three Rock Cove, Mainland and Three Rock Cove are two Local Service Districts next to each other. Back in 2022, they applied to become a municipality, which is something that we have talked about and encouraged: Local Service Districts that want to become incorporated. So these two Local Service Districts have applied, in 2022, to become a municipality. The process started, and they started the process which is the correct way, and they formally applied, and they went and they got a feasibility study completed, done and submitted to the department. But since then, there's been nothing.

Every question that was asked of the two LSDs by officials had been answered. I could show you a string of emails that are written by the chair of Mainland and the LSD of Three Rock Cove to department officials, to deputy ministers and others asking for an update. Every time, the answer is the same: We're still working on it – we're still working on it.

When they ask exactly what it is, what information do you need to finally make your decision, there is nothing. Most recently, after another request, the answer back, once again, was, well, we've changed out assistant deputy ministers and we are not familiar with the file; we'll have to go back to look at the file again.

So it's a delay and a delay and a delay. Three years they have been asking to be incorporated as a municipality. Since 2022, the process started. We understand the processes, that things had to be done, checklists had to be done, feasibility studies had to be done; but now, for over a year, it's been stall, stall, stall. I think the people of Mainland and Three Rock Cove deserve an

answer. They deserve the right to know from their government what is holding up their incorporation as a municipality. They need to hear that from the officials in the department. They deserve that.

They've put in a lot of work, they've done their homework, they've done all the assessments and they went out and met with everyone in the community. All they're asking for is why do we continue to be delayed in getting an answer – three years. So I would hope that that is something that will get addressed now before the next election is called.

I've talked about a lot of things in terms of my district, but I also want to talk about health care or the lack of in my district as well. Once upon a time, I was told there were 16 specialists at the Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital in Stephenville. And now we're down to one. Now, there are locums providing service from time to time. But the erosion of services out of Stephenville and out of that hospital has continued over the last 10 years.

When I talk about that, it's simply not to say that we're advertising for positions – we're advertising. Putting an ad on your website is not going to get the job done. As we know, recruitment and retention is hard work. It means you have to get out there; you have to have people out scouring and doing it. It's not about simply going off for photo ops to this place or that place and saying, oh, we're on a mission to recruit. Recruiting is a full-time job. Retention is a full-time job. It doesn't stop and start. It has to be continuous.

There are people out there, there are agencies out there, there are workers working in our own hospitals and long-term care facilities and others that are great recruiters that we ought to be talking to these people about who do they know, who are their friends, who could they ask to come back, do they know of somebody who might be interested. But we cannot allow rural Newfoundland and Labrador to see our health care system simply flowing out of our

communities and all centralized. That's what's happening.

It's not just doctors. It's also other positions, whether it's wound care, whether it's mammography services. It's all these other services that people are now having to travel for. Services that were once available in their community, in their hospital. That's no longer there. We're having to travel. Or if it's there, it's intermittent and there's no guarantee that it will be there.

So these the are facts that are actually out there right now happening in our hospitals. When I think of the opportunity we have to maximize the use of the physical structures we have already in this province, Stephenville has an acute-care hospital with two ORs. Those two ORs should be working, should be maxed out.

When we think about services for a region, it's not just about what you have in one building or another building; it has to be about the region and how do we turn around and maximize the use of our OR space that we have there. Putting approximately 16,000 people that are served by that particular hospital or have had services from that hospital on the road is not what we ought to be doing from a health care perspective. We ought to be making sure that we have people in our own communities to be able to service them.

When we have a facility there that can do this, we ought to be making sure that we have the staff to run it. That has to be part of the system. Whether it's Carbonear, Clarenville, Stephenville or any of the other facilities that we have in this province, we have to find a way to make sure that we do not give up on them, that we maxed out the utilization of these facilities and we staff them up. Because I believe that they can be utilized, should be utilized and I certainly intend to utilize them. But that's something that needs to happen. It's not happening. Rural Newfoundland and Labrador are seeing an erosion.

Recently, I went to Central Newfoundland and spoke with a lady whose friend was a

dietician from that same community. Funny thing was there was a position open for a dietician there in that community and there is a person from the community who just finished their program who wanted to come back and work in the community, but she wasn't able to come back because the organization in Central couldn't afford or couldn't find a way to allow her to have 10 hours of supervised time in her community, which she needed apparently as part of her training, her apprentice program, somebody needed to be with her for 10 hours for so many weeks and they couldn't do it. They said they couldn't do it.

Here this dietician wanted to go back home and is not able to go home because we can't find a way to have somebody provide that supervision that this student needs to complete her internship so she can turn around and become a valuable member of our health force in Central Newfoundland, in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. That is a challenge; that is something that we should not be talking about here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I've also spoken a lot to other health care professional as well who have experienced similar situations, and education. Again, most recently, a teacher in a community who is working full-time temporary – from the community, moved back to the community but was not offered a full-time job.

Now, there may be all kinds of reasons around that and other things and excuses given, as you know – it's to do with the union; it has to do with this or to do with that – but think about the principle of what we're trying to do here. We're trying to keep people in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're trying to build up. We want our younger people to stay here and work. When somebody moves back to their home community and they're not guaranteed their job, it's very challenging for them to be able to put down roots. It's very challenging indeed because at any time, they could be told no, sorry.

Then we have examples, as we all know in all of our districts, of teachers who have been on – quote – casual staff, who have never been offered a full-time position, for years in our communities. Is it because we're exploiting them? Is it because we know if we make them permanent then we won't have the casuals to call in? Does that seem fair to people who have put in a lifetime of dedication and want to stay in their home communities and work, that we are finding ways of not being able to do something?

These are the challenges that are there but these are things that we ought to be able to overcome. We have the people right there who want to stay and work and we're not finding a way to keep them there. That's the challenge I have with this. Our challenge and our goal has to be to put people to work and to find people who want to come back. They want to stay in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and, b'y, we should be finding ways to make sure they do and I will continue to lobby for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: There are so many other positions and people out there that are having challenges.

Let me go quickly to something that I've talked a lot about as I've travelled around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We all know we have community organizations that do tremendous work for us and tremendous work all over Newfoundland and Labrador; a lot of community organizations of volunteers and others who have staff that take the work, take the jobs and do the jobs. I've always said that these organizations will take a dollar and turn it into five.

That's what we ought to do, but many of these organizations don't get the core funding support from government. I'm not blaming any government. I'm suggesting that it's something that ought to have been looked at. We ought to be talking about it because they provide valuable service to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

When I think of an organization like the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities who have no core funding and who, every year, don't know if they're going to be able to survive to carry on for the next year or not. They all have to depend on grants.

These are challenges. These are great organizations and I'm not suggesting that we're automatically going to simply provide core funding to everyone, but we ought to be sitting down with them. We ought to be sitting down and have that budget discussion and it's not going to be the same for all organizations. Every one will be different but let's have that discussion. They would welcome that. They'd welcome an opportunity to sit down and debate and talk about how much I'm going to provide as core funding or not provide.

These are the things that we can do. It's not about increasing the budget. It's about making better choices about how we want to spend our money, and I think there's lots of room to make better choices on how we want to spend our money.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I recently met with an organization, a rural development association, who have employment for up to 100 people. They have no core funding; they rely on grants. Every year they rely on grants and they try and apply for every grant that's available.

This organization has done some remarkable things. I recently met with two young people who had addiction issues. This organization was able to work with these individuals to get them back so that they are now actually working members of the community, working within this rural development association and the projects they have. Two people taken off the streets that had struggles but are now back working and productive. That's because of organizations like that.

I feel like I want to play the video. It's amazing, this story, and I'm sure there are others; but this organization, a few months

ago, applied for a funding proposal for a three-year project – three years – that would provide stability. Not only have we not addressed that, but the sad reality of it is that nobody responded to them. No government department actually wrote them back or picked up the phone to say we've got your application, it's on file and we're reviewing it. Not even the courtesy of a response.

What kind of message are we sending to these community organizations, to these people who are out there doing tremendous work in rural Newfoundland and Labrador? We're saying no to rural Newfoundland and Labrador; that's what the government is doing by not even responding to people. Whether it's the people that live in Cape St. George, who are still waiting for an answer on the repairs caused by the flooding; whether it's a rural development association, right there, that can't get a response; whether it's that dietician, there are so many other examples of where we're failing the people in our rural communities, people who are wanted.

The Liberal government has had 10 years – 10 years in government – and we don't see this. So when the minister talks about the budget and why we're not supporting it and talks about all these great things, well, I can go on and on and on and on about all the things that aren't in the budget, and that's where some of this sings.

So the principle of core funding, let me tell you, after the next election when we're sitting on that side of the House, core funding will be part of the discussions for all these community organizations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Family Care Teams: We've heard lots of discussions about Family Care Teams and lots of talk about how many people are rostered or not rostered. I just want to quickly bring up a little story because while we talk about 75,000 people that are currently rostered, we all know there are many more that aren't. We all know there are 168,000 people who do not

have a family physician. That's not my number. That's a number that we've been talking about from the Medical Association.

I want to share a story because we stand up and say that all of these people that are on the list are somehow looked after. Well, this is an email I had recently and it says: It was interesting hearing the CEO of Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services saying how they're having success matching patients with Family Care Teams.

It goes on to say: I will tell you about my experience, and it's not positive. After registering with NL Connect, approximately two years ago, we had a call about three weeks ago verifying our information; however, they couldn't assign us to a Family Care Team because they're at capacity here in Grand Falls-Windsor.

We were told that since they called us, myself and my husband are no longer on the list – they called us, so now they're no longer on the list. I was given a local telephone number so that I can call and see if they have spots available for us. Oh yes, in that phone call, we were also given a number for Teladoc.

So if other patients registered with NL Connect or called and given the same information we were given, the CEO is misleading the public because people's names are removed but they still have not been assigned to a Family Care Team.

Now, if that is happening, if that is factual – and I believe this person 100 per cent, a former health care worker. If this is what's going on right now in rural Newfoundland and Labrador in our Family Care Teams, then we are failing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are failing people who believe that their roster, that they're going to get a call and they're going to be able to get to see a family physician or some other primary care provider.

This has to be fixed and ought to be fixed. This is not how our health care system should be working. You get a call and because they tell you we have no room for

you, you're taken off the list. That cannot happen. That should not be happening.

There are more, I'm sure, and I'm sure after today, we'll get a lot more calls. It's great to announce Family Care Teams. We've heard announcement after announcement, another Family Care Team, another Family Care Team. We now have 17 Family Care Teams. How many of those Family Care Teams are fully staffed? Where are the staff coming from?

I've heard examples of nurses leaving the acute-care hospitals to go to work at a family care clinic because they only have to work 9 to 5. So are we really just shifting, or are we really improving? Because that's a question that needs to be asked. When we talk about this, it sounds great, but we ought to be focused in on exactly what is going on, where are people coming from, where are people going to. Do we really know?

Yet, we know the statistics. We know how many people still don't have a family care provider. We know how many people are paying to see a primary care provider, a nurse practitioner. Because after four years, this Liberal government still hasn't figured out a way to reimburse the patient for that expense or to find a way to have nurse practitioners part of the system.

The federal government has made it mandatory for next April of 2026. We should not have to wait for that to be made mandatory. That should be happening right now in our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we also have, of course, all the challenges on the West Coast, not only with Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital, but with the regional facility in Western Memorial. A brand new hospital that was built, yet the challenges that we have seen because we have failed to understand that when you reduce the number of beds in an acute-care hospital and you open up a new one and you haven't got room for all of the ones that were in the old one, you ought to have a

plan in place as to how you're going to make the difference.

But again, a lack of planning resulted in a fact that we were in overcapacity at the new hospital in Western Memorial and it was forever before government made a decision to finally say, oh, we recognize now that we had no plan. The Liberal government says we have no plans, so we'll go – first of all, their plan was to turn around and double up seniors in their rooms in long-term care.

That was the plan until the Opposition stood up, all of us on this side of the House, including my colleague from Western Newfoundland over there, Bay of Islands, and others, and complained about. Finally, they reversed that decision and now they're going to reopen the old Western Memorial hospital, something that was calling for from day one.

It all goes back to planning. Because they built the new long-term care facility before they built the new hospital. They built the long-term care facility with 102 beds when their own actual reports and forecasts that they would've had in the department said, by 2025, you are going need 182 long-term care beds in the Corner Brook region. So if we don't start making decisions based on the evidence, based on decisions that are sound in logic, we find ourselves in situations where we're coming up short.

That's happening in Western. We announced that we were constructing a brand new hospital with oncology services going to be delivered in Western Newfoundland – a great service for the residents of Western Newfoundland. Something they were all looking forward too. But we realize now that the hospital opened up without the service. As I stand here today, I'm not aware that there is that service available in Western Newfoundland.

We now have heard stories about concerns around the new Waterford hospital from various groups of whether or not there's actually enough beds in the new Waterford hospital that's built on campus – a beautiful

facility, but concerns around the number of beds in that facility.

When we see and we talk about planning or lack of planning, and that's what's happened here in this budget and this government, is the total lack of planning. When I think about how this Liberal government went out and leased the hotel for \$7 million a year for three years, plus \$6 million operating cost, was that a plan, or was that simply a reaction to a Tent City across the road? Because clearly planning would not say you go out and spend \$21 million on leasing a hotel that was worth four-point-something million on the books. And now, as we know, the owners of that hotel have quickly turned around and sold it, I would imagine, for a good price because they have guaranteed income for another year and a half from the Liberal government opposite.

Yet, as I stand here today, I have not heard of what will happen after that lease is up. What is the plan? What is the future plan? That lease will expire in a year and a half. What is the plan? We should have a plan now of what's going to be happening. You can't wait until a lease expires before you decide what your action plan will do. We ought to know what's happening now. What's going to happen when that lease is up? Is the plan to renew it? We don't know.

But those are the things that we ought to be talking about. We ought to know what's going to happen. There are lots of discussions, but let's know what is the plan. Because we think back of all of the money that we've spent in reaction. You know, when we talked about poverty reduction, big subject that everyone likes to talk about the words "poverty reduction," but we had a Poverty Reduction Strategy. It was considered to be one of the best in the country. I don't understand why it wasn't kept going but the Liberal government decided, for whatever reason, to scrap it.

Then when we asked the questions about poverty reduction, we get the answer that we're doing this and we're doing that. Well, we know there was no plan. What

happened over the last four years has been nothing to do with planning but simply to do with reacting. We have spent more money reacting that we probably didn't need to spend if we had to have plans in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: That's the challenge.

It's the same issue when I talk about housing. What was the plan for housing? What was the housing strategy? We were told there was a housing strategy and then we were told, of course, numerous times – and *Hansard* has it recorded, not my words – about the number of times that different Members opposite stood up and talked about all the houses that had been built. Then only to find out that the numbers were completely exaggerated, were nowhere near the truth and that the outcomes weren't there.

Then we got reactions. Every time we get reactions – is that the best way to spend your money when you're always reacting? We all know that there will be times when we have to react to different situations but when we think about poverty reduction, when we think about low-income housing, when we think about support for our groups that are out there doing great work, those are planning decisions that we ought to be able to make. We have talked a lot about that, about the need for increased planning when it comes to our poverty reduction strategy. We've talked about the need for a solid housing strategy.

We have talked about all of those things, but if I go back over budget after budget after budget, they're great – the speeches have been great. They've been great. The problem has been the delivery. That's the challenge. The challenge is the speeches are great. Every year, I can go back through four of them, five of them, six of them, boom, boom, boom, but it's what's actually happening on the ground that matters.

We heard a lot of words about, again, the Health Accord – great document. It's not a great document unless it's executed

properly and the failure to execute has become the legacy of this Liberal government. That is what they will be remembered for, the failure to execute on issues around a human resource health plan for health care professionals; failure of a solid poverty reduction strategy in the last four years; failure on a low-income housing strategy. All of these things – crime is another one. We're adding more. We could have seen this coming.

They talk about now a task force. There was a task force. They closed it down in 2018 and now we're going to start again another task force. Why did we close the first one down? Why was that shut down? Those are the challenges that people are asking. It's great to make announcements, announcement after announcement, but what we ought to be able to do is say, are we better off? Do we have a plan?

While I'm on the Health Accord, I want to speak a little bit about some of the social determinants of health. We've just talked about one of them: housing. I want to talk to one that impacts my district significantly and that is water. Access to clean drinking water is considered one of the important social determinants of health.

I want to bring up the Local Service District of West Bay. West Bay has been applying for help in setting up a water – actually becoming part of a large water system at Lourdes. Lourdes has a water system that was developed as a regional water system. The irony of the situation is that the actual water supply is in the boundary of the Local Service District of West Bay, but it does not provide service to the Local Service District of West Bay.

For four years, whatever the number – I lost count – the people of West Bay, the Local Service District of West Bay have gone through the process, have gone through the forums, have raised their share and have asked to be hooked up to the Lourdes water supply. The Town of Lourdes was willing to allow that to happen. They have worked the semantics around how money would be collected, the water fees and how it would

be all done, but every year, for the last number of years, this project has been not approved. Yet, the people in that Local Service District have seen their wells dry up, have seen their wells become contaminated.

It's not just the Local Service District of West Bay; it's the next ones up, in Piccadilly, in Abraham's Cove. We have a real problem with access to water. A lot of people years ago, yes, built their homes and had their wells, but the well waters have become contaminated, so they need assistance.

Then there are the other options. It's not always about the need to have a big water line or big systems. Sometimes there are opportunities to use artesian wells. The community of Port au Port East have a water system that's based on a well being drilled, and they have a reservoir, so does the town of Kippens, so does the Town of Stephenville. But in Port au Port East, they have applied for funding to drill another well because they are at capacity when it comes to the availability of water from the supply in this particular well.

There have been housing developments turned down by the Town of Port au Port East based on the lack of water, based on the fact that they will not be able to provide water service to any new housing developments. A real opportunity, again, in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, innovative in what they're asking for, innovative, in some ways, in terms of how they will get this by building these larger artesian-type wells.

So there's a real need, and I'm sure it's not just in the District of Stephenville - Port au Port when it comes to the challenges with our water. Again, I go back to one of the social determinants of health is clean drinking water. We still have a significant number of municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador, and in particular rural Newfoundland and Labrador, that are on boil-water orders and have been for years. That needs to be addressed if we're really going to get serious about health. One of

the social determinants of health is clean drinking water and access to it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: It's gotten so bad in my district that there's a local water stream that comes out of the ground – and we've seen these all over rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador where people go to get their drinking water and get it tested. It comes out of the things. Well, there's one of those in Stephenville right now.

The lineup at that particular stream, that pipe, I would suggest the lineup is larger than that at McDonald's at lunchtime. That's how many people line up there to fill up to try to get enough water to bring it home, to cart it back home in their containers back to their homes on the Port au Port Peninsula, and others, because we don't have access to clean drinking water. That's the reality that needs to be looked at, that needs to be addressed and I would hope that, again, the application from West Bay has gone in to get this started.

We all recognize that this will not be done in one budget. It will take several years for us to get to the end of the project but if we don't start it, we will never finish it. That's why it's so important for us to make a commitment. Let's start getting this stuff done. Let's start getting back to making sure that we have that water system available for the people of West Bay and for others in my district who are reaching out to say: We need more water; we need access to water. I think there's a real opportunity for us to do that.

Again, as I continue on, I mentioned crime. I asked a couple of questions on crime the other day in terms of the number of police officers that are actually working right now in our province. I know the minister is going to, I think, provide that information to us, he's committed to doing that and I look forward to getting it, but crime has become a significant problem. I said it the other day and I'll say it again, once upon a time, we would watch crime on TV and go visit a doctor in our community walking down the

streets. Now what we see is crime in our communities, and in order to see a doctor, we have to follow a TV screen or call them on our phone.

I think about what we're celebrating. The Liberal government celebrates the launch of virtual care and yet, I think about the number of hospitals in this province that no longer have physicians working in them and we're now announcing virtual care. I think about the Northern Peninsula, 10 years ago there were doctors in Roddickton, there were doctors in Flower's Cove and it wasn't that long ago the Liberal government announced, hey everybody, we're going to have virtual care available – 10 years later.

I talked to my colleague in Lab West. I heard him speak yesterday about Lab West and about the hospital in Lab West, about the lack of family physicians in Lab West and the significant challenges that is having on people – and all across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. My colleague from Bonavista stood up yesterday in the House and talked about the hospital in Bonavista and talked about the challenges that people in his district were having.

He referenced a couple of examples of people in his district and he talked about the people, they had to go online to see if the hospital doors were open for business. I say, what have we come to when the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have to go online to try to figure out whether a hospital is open or not? That's a sad state of affairs and nothing to be proud of – nothing at all to be proud of.

Speaker, we've talked that this is a budget that the minister says we ought to be supporting. Like in the past, we have put forward many suggestions. The minister mentioned the Seniors' Advocate, the Seniors' Benefit and, yes, it's good to see it's being indexed but they had an opportunity to increase it. The Seniors' Advocate has recommended a 20 per cent increase plus indexing.

This Liberal government has refused that recommendation and simply chosen to say

we're going to index the Seniors' Benefit. We're not going to increase it by 20 per cent. Well, that's something that I will tell you, after the next election, we will guarantee that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I also want to make reference to the comments from one of the candidates for the leadership of the Liberal Party in a debate.

The minister has talked about the \$750 million that they have invested in Newfoundland and Labrador to make life more affordable. One of the Liberal candidates, in the recent debate, stood up and said \$750 million is not enough, and we agree with him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: So even her own ministers, her own colleagues in the House, the next Leader of the Liberal Party could be saying and disagreeing that \$750 million is not enough. That's something that we agree with. It is not enough. That's why we need to have plans in place and not just simply reactionary.

Finally, before I sit down, I want to reference the comments of the Premier yesterday when he was in Argentia. When he was asked for his comments on the budget and the Premier said, this budget was necessary. It was a necessary budget that had to be delivered – necessary, but not aggressive. In other words, it doesn't go far enough. Even the Premier has admitted that this is nothing more than a caretaker budget; that this is a budget that is necessary but not aggressive for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It's not aggressive in dealing with the issues that they have with the cost of living and with access to health care, not aggressive at all when it comes to recognizing the challenges in rural Newfoundland and Labrador where people are continually facing challenges –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: – where health care has eroded, where the cost of living has gone up and that's all people want access to. They want access to health care and they certainly want to be able to afford to stay here. Let us be the province where people come to, not come from.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand and have a few words on the budget today. Always a pleasure to be able to stand for the people of Humber - Bay of Islands and discuss the budget and the issues concerning. One of the issues I'm going to bring up right from the start, Mr. Speaker, is something concerning Lark Harbour; it's the ship that came aground. I think it was February 15 it came aground in the Cedar Cove area.

I know that we've all seen the dramatic rescue by search and rescue which was great. They're heroes for doing what they did to save the people that were on the boat. I'd also like to recognize Ricky Crane, who is the president of the Corner Brook Royals who got them to drop a puck in the Royals game to let them know that they're welcome in Corner Brook and we were appreciative that they made it off the boat.

They're concerns that are happening now and I'll be looking for answers to see what the province can do. I will be saying, here now, that I'll be asking the Premier questions on this today – just what the province can do. The two questions that I had today, my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, said I could ask the questions because of the issue. So I'll just give the government a heads-up to see what they can do about the shipwreck and I'll explain the seriousness of it.

The two questions I'll be asking today will be addressed to the Premier and the province. I'll give you time to try to find out what can be done by the province, because we all know it's a federal issue. We all know it's a Coast Guard issue. I don't want to blindside anybody; I just want to try to help the people out there to get this done.

What's happening now, as we've all seen, the shipwreck – I've viewed it several times. Actually, I went out the weekend and looked at it again and I'm dealing with the mayor on a regular basis, both mayors. I'm dealing with a lot of fishermen in the area. Everything was moving along until it just stopped. They just got a response just a little while back, the mayor, saying what the plan is to get the Bunker C oil off. As we know, that's very heavy oil.

Last weekend, there was a couple of tar balls that were found in on the beach. Of course, they're saying now we're going to bring it up and analyze it, see where the tar balls came from. They do have the search and rescue boats out, small boats around monitoring it. They do have some environmental protection buoys outside, just in case it do – they're saying that there's no leak, but there are concerns there.

The biggest concern that the mayor, the fishermen – it is a big fishing area for all Lark Harbour, York Harbour and many others. It is a big fishing area outsider Cedar Cove, all along that whole coast and it would affect Port au Port also, I say to the Leader of the Opposition. It does affect the whole area.

The big thing that they were going to do was to build a road out through Cedar Cove to the boat so they could take off the oil. For some reason, that has stopped. It was because of cost – some people had concerns about it may ruin Cedar Cove but the overwhelming majority, especially people out there who make a living from the sea, says the most efficient way and environmental way is to take it out, build the road, unload the oil there and drive it in.

What's happening now is they're putting it on little containers on top and they're waiting for the good weather to come so they can take so many of those little containers, take it off and move off with it.

In the email that the town received, they said weather depending. If anybody has been out to Lark Harbour and York Harbour, the weather is usually bad with the wind. In Cedar Cove, it's very bad. So the question that the people are saying, how long will it take to take it up, put it on some small containers and then wait to ship them on a barge to get rid of them somehow?

The estimated amount of oil on that boat is 1.3 million litres. That's a lot. This is the concern of the people, if they have to wait until all this oil is taken off bit by bit, with the ship embedded into the rock now, a strong wind could either break the ship, which there are holes in the ship now – it is double hulled. In the ship now, there are holes and if that moves back out or cracks, we've got a catastrophe.

I know they were dealing with the federal Coast Guard who is monitoring it on a regular basis, but everybody's concerned that because of the insurance company and the MSC who's overseeing it, that they're saying that, okay, we're working with it, but they've been hearing that now for 2½ to 3 months. The road option was done. They had the companies ready to start the process to build the road out. The condition was they put it back, best they can, to the same natural state, which would be hard, but it's much better than having a catastrophe out on that West Coast, I can assure you.

I will be asking the province now to help out. I know the Minister of Fisheries and I know the Minister of Environment – because it will affect both departments on that because if the oil is out, it is going to affect a lot. I don't know if the Minister of Environment, even if they put in permits for the roads to get the roads built. I don't even know if they reached that stage. They did put them in?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: So the minister acknowledged that they did put the permits in to get the roads done, but they stopped it. I would say it's for the cost. That's what I would say is the reason why. It is because it's going to cost so much to build the road out.

This is a big concern now. The issue that they have is that the insurance company or MSC, themselves, are saying now we've got to try to do it the most cost-efficient way, not the most environmentally efficient way.

I'll say it again. I know it's a federal issue, but we need to step in now. The province needs to step in to go after the Coast Guard and say here's what we want, give it a time period to get it off. We want the most efficient way to have it done, environmentally efficient way, which everybody agreed, and they agreed it's the road, to build a road out.

Anybody who has been in Cedar Cove, I don't know if anybody has, it's the big drop and you can come in so far and there's already an ATV trail. They have to expand the ATV trail, of course, to bring in the heavy trucks and then build the road out. It is a big drop when you get down, when you get to the beach.

To save the fishery, to save the livelihood of the hundreds and hundreds of people, everybody feels that's the most efficient way. If MSC is waiting for the weather and say we are working around the weather, we'll be here the next year or two trying to get 1.3 million litres of heavy oil off that boat, I can assure you that right now.

The people have a major concern and I'll say once more before I go on to the other issues that I have, that I will be asking questions today in the House of Assembly to give the government plenty of time to try to get some answers and see what they can do, as a province, to support the town and all the fisherpeople out in Lark Harbour, York Harbour somehow to put pressure on the Coast Guard to try to find some way to get this resolved ASAP.

P. LANE: How many kilometres of road?

E. JOYCE: How many kilometres of road? I'm not sure because I don't know if they need – I don't know if the minister can speak after on it – four kilometres of road.

Cedar Beach itself is the lower part where you're going to have to build up, because it is a big drop and when I walked it, you could see that it is a long way down. There's already a trail built out which would make it much more convenient for them. So four kilometres that the minister – and I would say that's about it, when you walk, when you leave off the main trail into where the cabins are, to get down to Cedar Cove, that is about the same distance.

As I was out there on Sunday, I went down in the cove and I went up on top to look down at it, you can see where the ship is into the rocks. I'll just give people an example. I was out there two years ago when a house blew off, the wind, 130- and 140-kilometre winds you get in that area. Cedar Cove, it's a cove, when you get the high winds, it's even multiplied when it's coming in the cove.

I just have to bring that up on behalf of both towns, York Harbour and Lark Harbour. Both mayors have been looking at this and a lot of fisherpeople have been calling me, and I got more emails this morning from the town saying here's the concern. They finally got a response from MSC concerning the *Baltic*. I'll leave that there until this afternoon.

I'm going to speak on health care for a little while. The number one issue on the West Coast that I hear on a regular basis is health care, bar none – absolutely, bar none. We all knew this was going to happen. A year before, nine months before, the government moved people from the old Western to the new Western, I said, there are 50 or 60 long-term care patients I know personally that are going to moving over, what are we going to do? Nothing done.

We had the key. Turning over the key, 75 per cent, everybody knew then that there were 55 to 62, I think it was at the time, patients going to move over in the acute-

care beds. What was done? Nothing. Then they had the grand opening and, again, a few months later, four or five months later, what was done? Nothing. Then they had the move, people moving over and that's when the problem started.

I know, now, that the former minister went and started the move to the old Western to get 45 beds there in the old Western, but 45 isn't going to be enough? I know, personally, it isn't going to be enough. I know a lot of the people that are there and I know a lot of the people on the wait-list trying to get in. They're trying to get into long-term care because they're in acute-care beds.

This is the issue and I say it for both leaders. Whoever becomes the Leader of the Liberal Party, I'm asking you to take the complete review of what's happening in Western Newfoundland.

The latest: The rehab in the new Western, the patients in the rehab had to move the equipment over. I know personally. They actually had to do that, move the equipment around. I've got two or three complaints because people had to go to rehab and they had to get a wheelchair for one piece of equipment to get out in the other room where they moved the other piece of equipment because they couldn't walk it so far.

I'm serious about this. I've seen it. I've been there. I've sat down with it. This goes back to 2019 and 2020, so I'm not putting this on the shoulders of the previous minister, I'm definitely not, but I know this goes back to 2019 and 2020 when we were supposed to build additional units for them. It is a major problem – a major problem.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition talking about the Family Care Teams. Three years ago, there was one promised to Corner Brook – absolutely none. It's not there. Everybody talking about, well, you've got a Family Care Team. Yeah, I'm sick of hearing that. They probably work somewhere else. I don't know but I can tell you, there are none in Corner Brook.

So when you come out and make the big announcement that there's a Family Care Team and we're going to have people come in. We're going to have all the specialties lined out and you can all go see them and you can get your diagnosis right and it all just never happened in Corner Brook. It just never happened in Corner Brook and now you've got people waiting 24 to 36 hours in emergency. Don't anybody try to tell me it's not happening because I know personally. I know personally about it so don't go – anybody here – saying, well, no, b'y, the wait-list – I don't even want to listen to it because I'm hearing so many stories and I know personally about it.

I know personally about the rehab; the equipment being moved to make room for beds. I know about the number of patients that are on the wait-list. I know the number of seniors that go in there and they can't even get a bed. I know a person who had to take their husband home from cancer treatment because he was out in a hallway. I know it; I know the person personally. I was working on it. She said, forget it; I took him home.

That's our health care, and for anybody in this House of Assembly to say that this is not true, you got your head in the sand and this has been ongoing. I've been saying it since 2019. Here's what's going to happen and it's getting worse, it's getting worse, it's getting worse. It's actually beyond me when we know that there are so many thousands of people, close to 100,000, that haven't got family doctors. When you look at it and you do a bit of research and you find out that 63 businesses opened up in Alberta with nurse practitioners and we won't allow it in Newfoundland, there's something fundamentally wrong with our decision-making – something fundamentally wrong.

I can tell you that if anybody in this House seen their mother or father not be able to go to a doctor, call 811 and 92 per cent says go to outpatients which is already blocked – which is already blocked – and you know you got to go to a nurse practitioner to get your pills but you can't go back, you would not allow it. You would not allow it.

So if we, in this House of Assembly, won't allow it for ours, why are we allowing it for the people out there who we're supposed to represent? There's just something fundamentally wrong why we won't just make that decision. We all get older. I'm probably the oldest or the second oldest in this House of Assembly –

P. LANE: I'd say you're the oldest.

E. JOYCE: The oldest.

I'm probably the oldest one. I'm fairly healthy but I know people my age and younger who have to go to the doctor for blood work every three or four weeks. If you have to go to a nurse practitioner and you're an older person on Seniors' Benefits, you can't afford to go every month to get your blood work.

You have to pay for it, and they feel bad doing it. I can tell you, some of the nurse practitioners in Corner Brook that I spoke to, when they know they can't pay, they say come on in, and it's sad.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: It's sad for this government to stand and say, well, we're waiting for a review from the federal government. It's sad. When you can look at Alberta – and I can give it to you right here. I have it right here, where 63 opened up. I have it right here but yet we can't do it in Newfoundland and Labrador?

I just got to remind people that the big intent, and I have it in writing, is that we want to fill the hospital nurse practitioners first. We want a full complement of nurse practitioners. I always said to the current and former minister, and I'll say it publicly, you're missing the point. These people are working full-time at Western Memorial Regional Hospital or in the Western region. These people are doing this on the weekends and at nighttime because they see the need.

This idea that they're going to leave their job and say: Okay, we're going to be short at

Western Memorial Regional Hospital – I'll just use that for an example – because we're going to allow them to bill MCP, is a fallacy. It's an excuse. That's all it is. It's a complete excuse for not allowing them to do it because they're not leaving their job, they're doing it nighttime and weekends 3,000 and 4,000 patients; not saying how many more they can get if they're allowed to bill MCP because people can't afford to go. You don't understand it – obviously, you don't understand it.

The government has just lost its way on it. I'm serious. If that was the Liberal government years ago, the Liberal government who's down for the common people, that would be done. What can we do to take pressure off doctors? That would be done. It would be done. I can see Brian Tobin over in that premier's chair now standing up and saying we could take care of 4,000 or 5,000 people if we billed MCP. He'll stand up and walk over to the Minister of Health: Have it done today.

P. LANE: Tony will do it for you, won't you, Tony?

E. JOYCE: That's what I'm remembering from the Liberal Party. That's what I remember. When I see and, I said to the minister before, I would love to see before an election, one party to come out and say, we're going to allow nurse practitioners to bill MCP. I'd love for the announcement to come out and make that commitment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: He just said that I'll do it for you.

E. JOYCE: Well, like I said, whoever wants to come out and make an announcement in Corner Brook, I'll sit by you and I'll support it and I'll be with you if you want to come out and have a press conference; because I can tell you, that's thousands of people that we could help, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and we won't do it.

Now, if you look at Dr. Innes, give him credit unless you want to go line up at 6 in the

morning and then wait to see if you might get in. Once you do get in, you've got to sit and wait all day to see when you're going to be called. Yet, we've got an opportunity here with this. It is sad, I can tell you. It is sad.

I don't know what's happening in Cabinet now with all that but, I can tell you, I'd like to see somebody with a voice and someone with the strength to start banging the table and say we've got to get this done, because whoever gets that done for me, I guarantee you, I'll be on your side to make sure that everybody in the province knows who made that decision.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now stand in recess until 2 p.m.

SPEAKER: A seconder for that?

L. DEMPSTER: Seconded by my Deputy Government House Leader.

SPEAKER: This House do stand in recess until 2 p.m. this afternoon.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit visitors.

Before we begin, in the public gallery, I'd like to welcome Amanda Blackwood and Jim Giles. They're visiting this afternoon for a Member's statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we'll hearing statements by the hon. Members for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Harbour Main, Labrador West and Lake Melville.

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Mike Mackey was born in the former town of Windsor on August 14, 1962, and is one of eight wonderful siblings. In his early years, Mike worked for both Green Lantern and TRA before becoming a dispatcher with the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor.

Today, Mike keeps our town and its citizen's safe serving as the fire inspector for the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor. Mike Mackey joined the Grand Falls-Windsor Fire Department in 1985 and, today, celebrates over 40 years of service to our beautiful community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: While sitting on various committees in the fire hall, Mike brought a level of professionalism along with a sense of morale the moment he walks in through the door. Mike still resides in Grand Falls-Windsor and enjoys spending time with his wife, three children and five grandchildren.

Though I am very proud to deliver this today, and I know the Mackey family are appreciative to hear it, Mike's beautiful late mother, Loretta, who I am sure is smiling down on him today is more proud than any mom could possibly be.

Please join me as we honour Captain Mike Mackey and his dedication to the fire service for the past 40 years.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

NewfoundSand is a 100 per cent volunteer-led initiative created in the district of Harbour Main two years ago. An innovative idea created by Dave Saunders and Mitch Ketch in Clarke's Beach is now run by a registered co-op with a nine-member board of directors.

It recycles glass into sand, keeping it out of our landfills and giving it a second life to be reused as sand for construction, landscaping, golf courses and much more. Every year, over 1.3 million glass jars from households and more than 1,000 tonnes of commercial glass go directly to landfills. This project is more than recycling though. It is community-led innovation from the ground up. It is the empowerment of a community working together for the betterment of our environment.

Since its launch, NewfoundSand is garnering excitement and attention from people all over Newfoundland and Labrador who believe in the importance of reducing glass waste, promoting greener practices and who believe in the power of community.

Please join me in saluting these nine volunteer community members for their commitment and perseverance to see this novel idea come to fruition.

Bravo!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Labrador West is incredibly proud of Colin Rumbolt for his outstanding performance representing Team Canada at the Winter Special Olympics held in Italy. Colin's

dedication, resilience and athletic excellence were on full display as he earned both a gold and a silver medal in cross-country skiing. His achievements not only reflect his hard work and determination, but also highlight the spirit of sportsmanship and the strength of the Special Olympics movement.

Colin's journey to the podium is a testament of his unwavering commitment to his sport and the strong support of his family, the community and the Labrador West Big Landers. Competing on an international stage is no small feat, and Colin has inspired countless others with his talent and perseverance.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Colin for his success. His performance has brought great pride to Labradorians and serves as a reminder of what can be accomplished through passion, teamwork and community. Colin, your achievement in Italy with Team Canada will continue to motivate and uplift athletes all across the Big Land.

I ask that all Members to join me in congratulating Colin Rumbolt, an excellent athlete.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Speaker, Lacey Loder is a level III student at Mealy Mountain Collegiate in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; she will graduate in June. Lacey plans to obtain her undergraduate degree in science with a double major in psychology and biology; then move into clinic psychology or psychiatry with a focus on mental health.

While I cannot get into the specifics regarding the personal struggles Lacey has gone through, I can advise that the support of her extended family, neighbours and friends have allowed her to excel personally and academically. I'm, therefore, pleased to announce today in this House of Assembly, and thereby our province, that Lacey Loder

is the first student from Labrador to ever win the prestigious Currie scholarship at the University of New Brunswick.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. TRIMPER: A major criterion of this Atlantic Canadian competition is to recognize excellence in students who have overcome difficult personal challenges through their lives that may have otherwise derailed a post-secondary career. The Currie Undergraduate Scholarship is valued at \$75,000 over the next four years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. TRIMPER: Lacey is truly an inspiration for other young people who face adversity.

I ask all of my hon. colleagues to join me in wishing Lacey Loder well in her academic studies this fall at UNB.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I stand today to recognize International Earth Day taking place on April 22.

This year's theme, Our Power, Our Planet, highlights the important role renewable energy plays in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change. Our province is a leader in renewable energy. Today, over 90 per cent of our electrical grid is renewable. In 2023, we had the lowest levels of greenhouse gas emissions since 1994 and we are on track to meet our goal of reducing emissions by 30 per cent by 2030.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: As we look to the future, expansion of the hydro power potential on the Churchill River, and the promise of wind

development demonstrate our commitment to realizing the full potential of our renewable resources.

Speaker, we are working toward our goal of net zero by 2050 with supportive programs like our Climate Change Challenge Fund. We are currently reviewing applications for this program to help municipalities, non-profits and businesses improve energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and spur economic growth.

I encourage everyone in this House to remember that we have just one Earth. It is incumbent on us as leaders to ensure we do our best to protect it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Earth Day serves as a crucial reminder that our responsibility is to protect the planet for future generations. In this spirit, the PC caucus is happy to acknowledge that our province is at the forefront of renewable energy initiatives, showcasing a commitment to sustainability.

With the lowest greenhouse gas emissions since 1994, we are making significant strides in investing in a cleaner, healthier future. The PC caucus supports the growth of renewable energy across our province, recognizing its vital role in both environmental stewardship and economic development. However, all decisions must be made in the best interests of communities, local residents and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We continue to closely monitor the development of these projects and will demand accountability in ensuring the best possible deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. We are the stewards of our

province's natural resources and environment. It is our responsibility to ensure that projects are executed with the utmost diligence, transparency and respect for our communities and natural history.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

As a Labradorian, I'm witnessing first-hand the disruption of climate change in my own district. This government could be doing far more to grow the industries of tomorrow, budgeting \$90 million for oil exploration while putting very little towards rare earth minerals exploration and research. These are in very high demand for our future transition.

We call upon this government to do more to prepare us for the future, to invest more in critical minerals research, development and exploration, and do more to invest in future technologies to make us the leading edge in this province and this country.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to highlight our continued commitment to the students, educators and staff in the K-12 system.

In *Budget 2025*, we have made significant investments to increase the teaching services budget and enhance education overall. This year we are investing \$20 million, which will grow to \$44 million next year, to hire an additional 400 educators and learning assistants in the K-12 system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: These additional resources will help address some of the concerns in classrooms and the school environment. We have also made investments to help update school technologies to support a modern teaching and learning environment.

Teachers are, without a doubt, the backbone of our education system. This makes today a great day to announce the nominations are now open for this year's Premier and Minister's Teaching Awards.

The Premier's Award for Teaching Innovation and the Minister of Education's Award for Compassion in Teaching recognize teaching excellence in areas that are meaningful and impactful in our K-12 students. The deadline to submit nominations is May 9. I encourage everyone to consider nominating a teacher for these prestigious awards. Visit the department's website to nominate a teacher today.

Educators continuously demonstrate new ways to teach while fostering the well-being of students, and we are proud to recognize those admirable teaching efforts.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

I know, recently going through the budget and going through Budget Estimates, we realize that the announced initiatives do not go far enough to address violence, class size, class composition nor inclusivity. More needs to be done.

With regard to the Premier and the Minister's Teaching Awards, they are great initiatives which recognize very worthy educators in our province. Our teachers and

school administrators need to be recognized on a daily basis for their dedication, but we need to supply them with all the necessary resources to provide the safest and best learning environment for all of our children.

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 welcome this initiative to celebrate our hard-working teachers. However, awards and praise are not enough. Teachers really want the resources and supports they need to teach their students and meet their needs.

Government must – emphasize must – seek meaningful action and take meaningful action to address school violence and to implement class sizes that reflect the needs of the students in that class if we are indeed hoping to maintain the compassion of our teachers.

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've seen disturbing instances of gun violence in our communities in recent weeks, crime at record levels and now, today, we have confirmation of a record number of drug-related deaths.

After 10 years of failure, I ask the Minister of Justice: What can you offer besides future budget promises?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I share the Member opposite's concern with respect to the increasing number of drug-related deaths, and our sympathies and empathies are with the family and all those who struggle with mental health and addictions.

With respect to the specifics of the question, this government has recognized that justice and public safety is a top priority. We made historic and record transformational investments in public safety and justice, including creation of a historic and new Joint Task Force between the RCMP and the RNC tasked with taking drugs and illegal firearms off the street.

We have increased the – I'm happy to answer more in the next round, Mr. Speaker, because there are lots.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, today the province's chief medical examiner said "the number of deaths where cocaine has been implicated has risen steadily since 2021 with sharp increases in 2023 and 2024."

In reference to the Joint Task Force, I ask the minister: Why did the Liberal government disband the joint task force focused on organized crime and drug trafficking in 2018?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker

Of course, I wasn't here in 2018 but recognizing that this is an ongoing and accelerating issue across the country, Mr. Speaker, not just here in Newfoundland and Labrador, we took action to create a new transformational Joint Task Force that looks at taking those punitive and lethal drugs off the street.

I'm sure the Member opposite shares with me the shared values and the shared concern in order to execute it, removing all drugs from the street. We need to make sure that we're educating the children not to do drugs in the first place but, where there are drugs, to remove them definitively from the hands of those of the people who can harm them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we do indeed all share those same wishes but again, when I think about the fact that we had a joint task force in 2018 and it has taken seven years to reannounce that we're going to have another joint task force, that's pretty slow timing. It needs to be done. It ought to have been done faster.

Last year, in this House, when we asked about rising accidental overdoses, the minister said, Mobile Crisis Response Teams would help and – quote – "it is our hope that we will have those units up and running before the end of the year."

A year later, the Liberals have not fulfilled the promise for Burin, Clarenville or Conception Bay North areas. I ask, why not?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Mobile Crisis Response Teams are an integral part of rapid response. Should they not be available, however, there are

alternatives and 911 automatically reroutes those calls to the nearest front-line ambulance.

Service is provided; ideally, it would be with Mobile Crisis Response Teams but that is an issue we have to continue to work with local law enforcement as they determine, in many respects, the availability of those units. My colleague in Justice and Public Safety will be able to tell you exactly how much more money we've expended and will expend on law enforcement this year, but that is where the thrust of our endeavours are currently with mobile crisis.

Thank you.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, once again, we hear a promise made is not a promise fulfilled. A commitment made is not a commitment filled and, yes, there may be alternatives, but when a Minister of the Crown stands up and says we're going to have it, there's an expectation from the people of the province that it will be delivered.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I don't think it's good enough to simply blame it on the police, to say that they don't have the resources. Clearly, they've asked for lots of resources.

This budget didn't even mention mobile crisis teams. As we know, the current teams that are in place are missing up to 10 calls a month. That's a statistic that was provided to us earlier. I ask again: Why does this Liberal budget fail to staff the mobile mental health crisis units in this province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: I'm finally learning to wait for the light, Mr. Speaker. It's red though.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, let me take a moment to address the preamble.

First of all, this government does not blame police officers for anything. We're fully supportive of the hard-working women and men in the police force across our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: We're very fortunate to have incredibly skilled and dedicated individuals in the RNC and the RCMP. That's why, for two budgets in a row, we have not only invested in their infrastructure, we've invested in them, including: 10 new officers, this year, for the RNC; expanded scope of service across the province last year, including areas adjacent to Corner Brook; and new RCMP officers in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, today, the Seniors' Advocate also issued another report highlighting the government's ongoing failure to support seniors in our province; specifically, the failure to support seniors in their desire to age in place. The Seniors' Advocate stated that cost is the primary barrier preventing seniors from aging well at home.

I ask: Will the government implement all six recommendations made by the Seniors' Advocate today?

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

P. PIKE: Yes, I had an opportunity to look at – we didn't get it until this morning, of course – the report and had an opportunity to go through it. There are some things in that. We certainly will be looking towards each recommendation. We take this very seriously.

One of the recommendations that was in there, I noticed, is that they wanted a guide

for programs and services for seniors. We launched that last week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: I must say, we've gotten a lot of good compliments about it. I know each Member in the House has copies or you know where to get the copies. We are gone back to print now and we'll have lots of copies for you as you go back to your districts for district week and so on.

Thank you.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me continue.

In fact, the Seniors' Advocate found that 80 per cent of seniors face financial challenges in maintaining their independence in their own homes. That's 80 per cent and we're talking about barriers to independence; things like preventing falls, such as railings, non-slip tape, hand bars and bathroom modifications.

The Seniors' Advocate goes on to say injuries suffered in slips and falls are the leading reason why seniors end up in long-term facilities. Again, why hasn't this recommendation or the recommendations have been done to make it easier for seniors to stay in their own homes?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, we welcome the comments and feedback by the Seniors' Advocate. We'll take that under advisement and, certainly, integrate that into future plans.

I can tell you, as an orthopedic surgeon, I know all too well that slip and falls do cause people to be displaced from their home but, as a general statement and a general position of this government, and I think we've proven it not only in our statements but in our actions, a top priority is to allow

seniors to age in their homes or where they so choose.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, clearly what's been done so far is not working and there needs to be a lot more done.

Again, Speaker, the Seniors' Advocate also noted that the government's Seniors' Health and Well-Being Plan gives little attention – her words, not mine – to preventative care. One of her recommendations is to expand and fund the Home Modification Program to adopt a preventative approach eligibility.

I ask the Minister of Housing: Is this expansion included in this year's budget?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Minister of Housing.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I know Newfoundland and Labrador Housing has a lot of senior tenants in their units, Speaker. Myself, I have a Newfoundland and Labrador seniors' building on Thorburn Road that I visit every two weeks. They line up with their questions and concerns every two weeks and I'm very pleased to help them as much as I can.

I do want to say to them, in this budget, we did increase the Home Modification Program by \$1 million. That will certainly allow more seniors and more Newfoundland and Labrador Housing tenants and people in the community to access that funding to increase modifications within their homes.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, the budget currently before the House fails the seniors.

The latest report outlines clear gaps in services that are essential to helping seniors age safely and with dignity at home.

I ask the Minister of Housing: Why has the Housing budget for '24-'25 been reduced by \$23 million?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Minister of Housing.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I look forward to Estimates. I know, as all Members here know because we sit through Estimates, money comes in, money goes out, there's federal government money and, in Estimates, we will provide a fulsome response to that with the public servants here as well.

We have not reduced funding to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. We are maintaining \$8 million extra provided to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, as well as \$1 million extra to support the Home Modification Program.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, another recommendation from the Seniors' Advocate is for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to establish a low-interest loan program to make small preventative home modifications more accessible; specifically, by removing the requirements for assessments which are often impossible to obtain.

I ask the Minister of Housing: Is this program included in the '24-'25 budget?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Minister of Housing.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

We are still reviewing the Seniors' Advocate's report, and I thank the Seniors' Advocate for their work and all the seniors whose recommendations and suggestions contributed to that. We are going to review that potential program very seriously but I do want to say that, in our budget this year, we maintained an additional \$8 million for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing as well as \$1 million to increase access to the Home Modification Program.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, while controversy continues to rage about the government's decision to move the women's health services to the Janeway, on March 28, the CEO of the NLHS said – quote – very early exploratory phase, with discussions only now getting under way. Then, just over a week later, \$3 million was announced in the budget on April 9.

Speaker, is government's mind already made up?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, as we're aware, the conversations continue to happen. I have full faith in the CEO of Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: He's doing his job at undertaking a space evaluation and analysis process, Mr. Speaker, which is going to occur with consultation.

Let me state this very clearly and for all to hear: Everybody in this House of Assembly is interested in protecting and helping the health of women and children and in no

way, shape or form will we see that compromised.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, Premier.

But this money doesn't show up in the budget unless it's already been earmarked to be used. It just doesn't sit there for future planning. So we still feel, and I think a lot of people should feel that the decision has been made; they're just going through the final touches. And that's what we hear in the public.

Speaker, a little over a week, we went from an idea to millions in the budget, as I stated – remarkable. The minister insists there's a capacity at the Janeway; however, I previously asked in the House about the Janeway eye clinic, which is no longer even giving out appointment times.

So how much capacity is left in the children's eye health?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me take an opportunity to address the preamble. It's not uncommon for agencies and boards to request money. If the decision is not to use that money, that money will revert to us, Mr. Speaker. It's appropriate planning. If we didn't meet that request and the decision was to move forward with some renovation, the question would be asked why didn't we allocate.

So if the decision, based on consultations, is to continue with any renovation – which again, the decision has not been taken; this is at an analysis and consultation phase. Then that money will revert to the Treasury of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I never got an answer on the eye clinic, but I'll continue on because this one here pertains to the same issue.

Speaker, one family is worried about their child going blind and government's talking about moving services out of the Janeway to the community, moving others in and causing significant upheaval.

If families cannot even get an appointment time now, how is all this chaos going to help?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Obviously, I don't have details of a specific instance referred to by the Member opposite. However, should anyone be concerned that their condition is deteriorating or is urgent, I would encourage them to speak with their primary care provider or the referrer who is asking for them to see a specialist.

Those decisions about who gets seen when are made on clinical priorities only.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Well, Minister, you should know, and I've asked this question in the House before. It wasn't the first time I've asked about this eye clinic. I asked this a couple of weeks back. The minister should know and he should have had an answer for the House before now, and we're still waiting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Children are waiting. This is a big issue, children are waiting, and I've talked to people on both ends of this, it's a big issue. It's a bigger issue than being nonchalant with the response from the minister.

Speaker, we have also been contacted by a number of parents waiting for autism spectrum assessments and are facing excessive wait times. I've asked this before, too. Again, they worry about the media reports of what people and services are being taken out of the Janeway.

I ask the minister: If there so much capacity at the Janeway, why are parents waiting for months and years and upwards of 2½ years wait?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Member opposite is conflating two issues, one is in-patient services which is related to the Janeway and the other is out-patient services which are provided across the province in terms of autism spectrum disorder and such assessments.

We have given NLHS additional funding for additional people to deal with the backlog of appointments for screening and for assessment. In the interim, any child in the education system or the early childhood system can be afforded supports based on need and not on diagnosis.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

Yes or no, will the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development establish

an advocate for persons with disabilities before the House closes this spring?

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

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker.

We certainly acknowledge the fact that there's a significant number of people in the province that identify with having a disability. Justice Robert Fowler conducted a review of the statutory offices. In his review, Justice Fowler recommended that the focus of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate include persons with disabilities.

We're looking at this recommendation and we are certainly taking all matters into consideration around this. Prior to any decisions being made, with respect to any of these positions, we certainly will converse with all stakeholders.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, unfortunately the minister did not answer the question. It was a simple question yes or no, but I did not get the answer.

Will the minister bring in legislation to create an advocate for persons with disabilities before the House closes this spring? Yes or no.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm happy to stand up and speak as a former minister that was responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities in this province. For a number of years, Speaker, during my time in CSSD, I had the opportunity to build what I would consider positive relationships with many of the

strong disability advocates across this province.

We've been following it very closely, Speaker. We've just had a chance to get the report and take a look at it. We're certainly reviewing the report and we will take some time to determine the best steps forward from here, Speaker.

But make no mistake, we on this side of the House certainly support and have made a number of measures since I have been here over the past decade to support persons with disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So, again, we have no answer, but I will direct this question to the minister who is responsible for this department.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The Coalition of Persons with Disabilities and other advocacy groups for disabilities are so extremely disappointed. It's been five years since the Premier had promised this and it was in mandate letters to ministers since 2020 and it still does not exist, Speaker.

Did the minister forget the promise made to people with disabilities, or perhaps the Premier forgot?

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

The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm not going to stand here and play politics when we want to talk about the persons with disabilities in our province, but I will remind the Member, in case she missed it, of a

press release I have in my hand from June 2024, just one of many measures, Speaker, that we are doing to support persons with disabilities.

Back this year, Speaker, just six months ago, when we announced a new initiative, a \$26 million-investment. We were already there months ago, recognizing that there was needs and we wanted to support. The Newfoundland and Labrador Disability Benefit, Speaker, will come into effect July '25 and will include up to \$400 per month to persons with disabilities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: And the \$1,200 in Registered Disability Savings Program has already begun in January, and that's just a portion of what we are doing to support persons with disabilities.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, there is nothing political about this. This is about promises being made and promises being broken. The 2021 red book said all people have the right to access services and participate fully in their communities without barriers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Nancy Reid of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: One second.

Order, please!

It's hard to hear the question and the Member is standing right in front of me.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Nancy Reid from the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities has stated that people with disabilities, yes, they represent a significant portion of the population – 30 per cent. Yet, this promise has been denied for a disability advocate.

Why won't you take a position on this and establish that advocate?

SPEAKER: The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to thank Nancy Reid for the contribution that she has made for the disability community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: I know her very well. I worked with her. We did some great work together.

I go back, Speaker, to when the Member behind me was in Transportation and I was in CSSD. One of the things we did was put the parking lots for disabled people closer to the building. The crowd on that side had been in government 10 years before and had the healthiest people walking the least amount of time. I remember some of the things that we did back in the day to make it better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: I also, Speaker, would be remiss if I did not remind this House that recognizing the aging population that we have in this province, we brought in a Seniors' Advocate, something back in that day that the other crowd said was a luxury, Speaker. We'll continue to –

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, I just want to make a comment, and that was from what COD NL said with regard to the budget, and that was: There's nothing in it for us. Clearly, there's no thanks being supplied to this current government.

Let's switch tact. Speaker, in April 2022, the acting chair of the Public Service Commission himself said: My understanding is that the position has been advertised, it has been recruited for, there have been interviews, there has been a report generated by the Independent Appointments Commission and the report has been submitted to government.

I ask the minister: Is this correct?

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

S. COADY: Thank you.

First to the preamble, I will say to the Member opposite, a \$26-million investment has been made to support people with disabilities. I think that's significant. I know that up to \$400 per month will be going to persons with disabilities starting in July. That's a tremendous investment. We're not just saying we're acting; we're doing an awful lot to support that community.

I will say to the Member opposite, there have been and there are, on occasion, acting assignments within government. I will say to the Member opposite that the person to whom he is referring has been with government since 1986. Now, he did go outside and work in the private sector. He brings forward a lot of skills – conciliation skills, HR consultant – and he was the deputy minister.

SPEAKER: The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, seniors in Labrador West want to remain in their community. It's critical to them and the well-being of our community. To remain in that home, they often need help with personal and home care. Labrador West has no assisted living, no home care and no personal care homes.

I ask the minister: When will this government bring home care and home care workers into the public system, given that Labrador West cannot attract any of them?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Member opposite is probably aware that, under normal circumstances, personal care homes in this province, for the most part, have been private businesses. We have recognized that there are challenges in getting a private business to engage in providing that service in Lab West. We are working on possibilities to see what other options exist that would use maybe public funds and/or not for profits to provide that same service.

I hear the Member's concerns and I share them, to an extent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Speaker, we continue to see the important reports dealing with seniors' needs in this province, reports that have shown us that extensive work needs to be done. The recent AG report on personal care homes reveals serious incidents like death, missing residents, verbal and sexual abuse.

Will government engage with personal care homes and home care into the public

system to deal with these issues, starting with Labrador West?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

As I've said on several occasions and in this House and in the Member opposite's presence, we took the report from the AG very seriously. No number of serious incidents is acceptable. We have engaged with the personal care home operators. We have updated standards.

Our problem, I think, has been communicating those new standards to the public at large, and certainly we have done with the homes, with the operators and with NLHS who are responsible for their oversight. We have also provided an additional 17 FTEs to the NLHS to provide closer oversight and more rapid assessments for seniors.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, no wonder this government makes so little progress with its penchant for putting the cart before the horse.

After ignoring the concerns of pediatricians and other health professionals, pressure from those doctors, the NDP, the public and as well as the threat of a joint news conference by the NLMA and the Nurses' Union, finally forced the NLHS to do what it should've done months ago: Reach out to the health unions and commit to a consultation process with pediatric health professionals about the changes to the Janeway.

So I ask the minister: When will the department and the NLHS finally learn their lesson and consult before they act?

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

J. HAGGIE: I think it was not us that put the cart before the horse, but rather there was reaction to something that had not yet even been discussed.

What we have done and what NLHS have done very clearly is that they have begun a consultation process. There was a presentation made on at least two occasions. The CEO of NLHS met with the unions this morning and the Member (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HAGGIE: – is opposite. They had planned a joint news conference in the light of the discussions with Dr. Parfrey, who is doing an excellent job managing the noise from various locations.

In the light of those consultations, they have decided to wait and consult further with NLHS. The process is working.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're all well aware of the grounding of the container ship at Cedar Cove in Lark Harbour. The community councils of Lark Harbour, York Harbour, FFAW, fisherpeople and citizens are concerned of a possible oil spill, which would ruin the fishery and tourist attraction. MSC – Mediterranean Shipping Company – is determining how the salvage will take place. The process is very slow and depending on weather conditions.

I understand that this is a federal Coast Guard issue, but delay will potentially cause a major oil spill and a catastrophe for the outer Bay of Islands.

I ask the Premier: Will you contact the federal officials to have this salvage completed immediately to avoid a potential environmental disaster?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

First of all, let me join the Member opposite in celebrating those who navigated that terrible situation: search and rescue, the FFAW, members of your communities that were there in that time of crisis to ensure that there was no tragedy in terms of human loss.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: That said, there does represent a continued environmental threat and I assure the Member opposite that we have written the Canadian Coast Guard, we've written the federal government to ensure that they are taking this with this level of urgency and acuity that is required to protect that crucial fishing ground for people in that district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, one proposal of the heavy oil, 1.3 million litres, was to build a road four kilometres to the ship to have the fuel taken off safely and quickly. Due to the cost, this plan would now be used by filling containers which will be offloaded, weather permitting. The company is looking at their bottom line, their cheapest option, not the environmental concerns and the possible disaster. There was already tar balls found on the beach.

I ask the Premier: Will you raise this major concern with your federal counterparts to

help where possible to ensure that this environmental disaster doesn't happen and the oil is taken off as quickly as possible?

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, we'll continue to make sure the federal government understands the acuity, urgency and emergency of the situation at hand, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to make sure that the minister's office, despite the caretaker convention, understands the acuity of this issue. It is, as the Member correctly identifies, an immediate environmental threat to those incredible, valuable fishing grounds for the people in those communities. I can assure you, their voice will continue to be heard at the federal government level.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May 12, 2025.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance

with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 13, 2025.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move that notwithstanding Standing Order 9, this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, May 14, but shall continue to sit to conduct Government Business and, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 15.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to move the following resolution respecting the reappointment of the Citizens' Representative.

Be it resolved by the House of Assembly as follows:

WHEREAS subsection 3(2) of the *Citizens' Representative Act* provides that the Citizens' Representative is to be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council on resolution of the House of Assembly;

WHEREAS section 5 of the act states that a Commissioner may be reappointed;

WHEREAS the appointment of the current Commissioner, Bradley Moss, expires on April 30; and

WHEREAS it is proposed that Bradley Moss be reappointed as the Commissioner for a term of six years.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Bradley Moss be appointed as the Citizens' Representative for a term of six years.

That is seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motions?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, I think, asked a question yesterday or the day before about the number of RNC officers, as well as RCMP officers, within the province. I wanted to table those numbers or let him know the numbers today: 424 RNC officers, 112 civilian members. The RCMP has 456 officers and 16 First Nations officers as well.

I think he also asked about recruitment in that same question. The RCMP had 458 applications in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2024-2025; 195 applications as of March 31, and 40 cadets will be posted to B Division out of that graduating class that is coming soon; and the RNC have three classes that are currently happening – sorry one that is currently happening: 17 cadets in January, 12 cadets in July of this year and January, there are 15 cadets but that we expect that number to increase higher than that for January of 2026.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Are there any further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

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: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I just wanted to take a couple of minutes here today on this – it's actually my mom's birthday too, so I will remember the date. Happy birthday, Mom, in BC.

AN HON. MEMBER: Get that out of the way first.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, that's right. I'll get that out of the way first.

Today is a bit of a bittersweet day, Speaker, for our team on this side of the house because we want to thank the guy that's sitting to my right.

I think most of us have been filled with reflection over the past number of days since the Premier announced that he will be going back, where he will also be greatly needed, to the operating room. As I've travelled around the province and around my own district, many, many, many times I've run into folks that have said, he did this for me or he did that for me. One guy said, he fixed my missus' arm and that's just an example – someone said, he put my daughter back together.

Speaker, today, I just want to acknowledge the incredible contribution that our Premier has made to Newfoundland and Labrador during his five-year tenure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, as a dad with a young family at home, he stepped up at a time when there was nothing easy about

being at the helm of this ship. We were in very uncertain times in this province. We were navigating uncertain waters. I always say – and he doesn't like it but that's ok, I have the floor right now – he's a brilliant mind; he's a gifted surgeon we're getting back but we want to thank him for his contributions.

We look back over some of the things that he dealt with in addition to the huge deficits, in addition to leveraging all the goodwill he had with the federal government of the day and bringing back that \$5.2 billion so that the people that we represent wouldn't experience rate shock. In addition to that, there were the floods, there were the fires, the devastation that was on the Southwest Coast, the waves had barely calmed and he was on the ground there, the fires that were in Central, how swiftly he was on the ground there.

Last year, Speaker, I just remember being on the phone late at night, and we were learning that Churchill Falls was going to have to be evacuated and the Premier said, can Goose Bay handle 500 people? Less than two weeks later, we were on the phone late one night and the Premier said, can Goose Bay handle 10,000 people? He was at the helm when we successfully navigated the largest evacuation in the history of our province.

There are so many things that I could say about what the Premier had done while he was here. I think, in particular, his relationship with Indigenous people and the things he's done around Reconciliation. When we see the statue out front and when we see the beautiful murals not quite done yet – they're all completed; they're just not hung yet. There are so many signs that long after this young man with the high energy, long after he's gone, there are signs around this building. There are impacts, positive impacts in individual lives, positive things that have happened in all of our communities with this particular Premier at the helm, Speaker.

On behalf of all of our team on this side, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and

Labrador, I want to say that I believe history will be very, very kind to Premier Doctor Andrew Furey.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I think the Leader of the Official Opposition would like to have a few remarks, with leave.

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted, Sir.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I have said many times, publicly and in this House of Assembly, that it takes a lot of courage to put your name forward to become a Member of the House of Assembly and reach out to people, represent them in districts all over Newfoundland and Labrador. It takes an extra special commitment to take on the role of premier and doing that.

I want to congratulate the Premier on his efforts for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and I wish him and his family well into the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I, too, wish to thank the Premier. Certainly, the demands of representing a large district far removed from the place where he lives is challenging and one that's got significant geography to cover as well. Following that, representing a province with such diverse geography and needs and people is no small task.

Also becoming the front face of a party in this province, again, has its demands. Representing the province on the world stage adds further pressure. I understand, certainly, the sacrifice to family, what that means, and not being around when children's activities are going on. I also understand the significant sacrifice or the pause in your own career as a surgeon, because I fully understand the investment of time and money in becoming that professional.

So, for those reasons, thank you very much, Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, with leave.

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave given.

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

E. JOYCE: I just want to say again, Premier, as we discussed personally on many occasions, family comes first, and I agree with you.

I know as Opposition, sometimes we have our differences, but one thing I will say, I have the Premier's personal cell number, and it was always responded to with concerns. I just want to recognize that and put that on the record, that sometimes we may not agree on the issue, but it was always responded to and spoken to.

I've been around for a lot of premiers and taking the position of a premier, leader of a party, no matter what happens in your government, in your party, you're the face of it, it does take its toll on his family, and when you step aside for your family, you can't ask for any better gift to your family.

Congratulations in the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, with leave.

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave granted.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm just going to take a second as well to wish the Premier well. As my colleagues said, we may not have always agreed on every single issue, but I do feel that we agreed on most issues – not all, but most. I, too, appreciate the fact that on a number of occasions when I did reach out to the Premier, personally, he always got back to me. He kept me informed on things that were happening when there were things that were important to the province that affected us all. We did have that two-way communication, which I really did appreciate.

I also want to just say that, like all of us getting in the House of Assembly, I felt that for the first little while you were trying to get your feet under you, but once you did, I think that you did represent the province very well. Even if I didn't agree on every particular issue, I thought you really did. I have to say that when we brought home, repatriated the Unknown Soldier, that was certainly a very proud moment, and I think that you did that brilliantly, I really do.

I would further say that, in more recent times, I did watch you with Wolf Blitzer on CNN – and I'm quite serious – that you came across like a real statesman, very professional, it felt like you were in your element and I did feel proud as a Newfoundlander to have my Premier at the meeting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: So all the best to you and your family, and as much as you may be needed here, we need you more in the operating room. So get out there and get back to work soon.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Okay, we're going to move into the budget debate, the amendment.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I had the privilege yesterday of standing up and addressing some issues, and I stated I had a lesson plan. I'm going to continue that lesson plan I had yesterday, today, and I'm going to talk about the Lions first, the George's Brook-Milton war memorial initiative, and then the budget. I'll do it in that order.

For the viewers in the District of Bonavista watching now, two pillars of the District of Bonavista are its love of hockey and so many charitable organizations in the District of Bonavista. I'm thinking where I'm seated here today. I'm seated between two MHAs. One on the left, the hockey side, five Herder Championships from Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: When I talk about the charitable organizations, on my right, the Member for Exploits, 25 years in the Lions, was president, chair of the Lions' Winter Carnival, zone chair, Lion of the Year and served on many committees. So how fortunate for the District of Bonavista, the Member to be sitting between these two individuals.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I mentioned yesterday about how I attended the 46th charter night of the Fort Point Lions in Dunfield, Trinity. A small group, but they do phenomenal amounts of goods deeds. I want, just recap quickly, I said of the many donations they made to various school functions. The sick and needy, they gave a monetary donation, but they also help with wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, shower chairs, et cetera.

The last one is what I want to speak to in a short time, Speaker. It says they collect

glasses and they send them to Bishop's Falls to be refurbished for undeveloped countries. The Deputy Government House Leader stated that we had a resolution where Bradley Moss, the Citizens' Rep, will be staying on in his duties for the next six years. Bradley Moss was the District Governor that was that Fort Point charter night on Saturday night. I want to share with you a very emotional story that he shared with everyone that was in attendance that night.

He did it eloquently. I'm going to try to match it as close as I possibly could. The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, remember he said this morning in his address that if you have food, love and shelter, you're doing much better than most in the world. I think we all heard him say that. Think of that with this story that Bradley Moss read out, the first-person narrative.

Let's say that you're an average 60-year-old person living in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Take a look around; it's a pretty chaotic place. You live in one of the most economically depressed, violent cities in the world. Murder, kidnapping, road accidents, gang violence, armed robbery, rape and mugging all daily occurrences downtown where you live. They call it the red zone for a reason.

So there you are, along with 2.3 million other people, living in a tightly packed, mostly poorly built structure. Odds are you are surviving day to day on less than \$2. A bottle of coke in the streets cost \$1. Unemployment is well over 40 per cent. Eighty per cent live in abject poverty.

There are no social services, so you either work or somebody else works to keep you fed. You are one of the lucky ones, however, with a job sewing garments for that \$2 a day. But you have a big problem to add to all the others. Your sight has been failing for years. You haven't been able to read properly in recent memory and you are losing your capacity to sew, and there's nothing you can do about it.

One day you hear there is a group of Lions Club members from Canada testing people's eyes in your area. Free vision is non-existent. Word of this will spread quickly. So you get up the next morning at 4 and you walk a couple of miles to the clinic site, where you find a crush of 200 people or so in a line 2½ half hours before the clinic opens. You stand there in 35 degrees of heat and you wait.

Nearly eight hours pass in that lineup and, finally, you are at the very front of the line. All of your pretesting done, next one to see the optometrist, when a man comes along and tells you the clinic has to close immediately and empty out due to reports of violence in the area. But not to worry. You take this piece of paper and you can come back tomorrow and be seen.

Your day, which consisted of walking miles and waiting for hours in punishing heat, is over. You have to walk home and walk back again tomorrow. As a Newfoundlander now, how would you feel? What would you say?

Well, Bradley Moss says this, I can tell you what he said, because he was the man closing the clinic that day— Bradley Moss, our Citizens' Rep. The man smiled and he shook his hand, and he said, God bless you to everyone working there that day, as he walked out the door. Bradley Moss ended by saying, as you can probably tell, in that teachable moment, I was the student.

He came back the next morning and Lion Rick Buchanan, an optometrist from the Springdale club, restored his vision to that of a teenager. The man cried in front of us all. He ended by saying that was patience, that was humility, that was gratitude.

So when we look at the Lions, all the phenomenal work they do in Newfoundland and Labrador, these people are doing it in many parts of the impoverished world to make people's life much better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: King Lion Forsey from the district just passed me a note that says

450,000 pairs of eyeglasses have been distributed to aid vision impairment since 2018 from the eyeglass program. I think that's phenomenal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Moving on to the next item on my lesson plan, I want to commend, from George's Brook-Milton, four individuals who have embarked upon the erection of a war memorial in George's Brook-Milton, the province's newest town, which didn't have one: Morgan Ellis, the mayor; we've got Walt Ellis, whose family has been in George's Brook for generations; we have Curtis Skiffington and David Adams.

We know that there was Clarence Pelley who was killed in action on April 21, 1917, in the Battle of Arras in France. He has no known grave, and his name is inscribed on the memorial at Beaumont-Hamel.

With the strong representation of the forestry unit that served overseas from our area, which was based on the forestry, the monument will serve as a reminder for all the people and what they gave, and it will also be a memorial that will mark Clarence Pelley's name, to note that he was from George's Brook-Milton. I commend those people, and I've talked with the MHA from Lake Melville on several occasions on this initiative. I commend those people for doing that; they are also going to recognize all those who served within the forestry unit and overseas.

Speaker, we've heard a lot about the budget, and we've talked about the budget. The Deputy Government House Leader stood a very short time ago and she stated that we were in very uncertain times – we were in very uncertain times. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands mentioned yesterday in his address, talked about our debt. He stated that our debt is probably unsustainable as what we have. I want to hearken back, Speaker, to 2016 and the first budget of the current government. I just want to read a couple of excerpts from the Budget Speech from 2016.

The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance stood and said: The Auditor General and others stated the inability and inconsistency of the former administration to manage a fiscal plan has left our province to deal with an unprecedented deficit; unprecedented borrowing requirements; and unprecedented fiscal pressures.” That was stated.

She then went on and said, “The previous government’s willingness to mortgage our future has left Newfoundland and Labrador with the biggest deficit and highest net debt ever reached in our history.” That was year one of the current government in 2016, and the Member for Bonavista is only reading from *Hansard*: the official transcript of the House of Assembly.

Another excerpt from that speech, “It is impossible for us to be satisfied that we will spend more on debt expenses than we do on educating our children.” That’s true.

S. COADY: That’s true.

C. PARDY: Everyone states.

“Our government promised the people of Newfoundland and Labrador better management and real leadership.”

Last note: “Our government will establish a Diversified Wealth Fund once we have moved back into surplus ... The legislation will be designed to prevent any future governments from leaving our province in the fiscal situation we find ourselves in today.” In 2016, April 14, that’s the first Budget Speech from the current government.

Back in 2016-2017, we had a net debt of a little over \$12 billion; our total debt was \$15.8 billion. That is the time that I just read the excerpts from *Hansard* in the first Budget Speech of the current government.

In ’21-’22, we had a total debt of \$16.2 billion, up from \$16.6 billion; the total debt went from \$15 billion to \$24 billion. In ’23-’24, our net debt was \$17.2 billion; our total

debt was \$31.3 billion. In ’24-’25, net debt of \$17.8 billion; a total debt, \$30 billion. In ’25-’26, this current one which is today, the same government from the 2016 *Hansard* notes, we have \$32.9 billion on total debt; our net debt is \$19.4 billion. I would say, that is what a Member stood and said is unsustainable.

Now, one thing they had mentioned – let me go back to what they had said: We can’t have our government with debt expenses more than what we do on educating our children. Remember that? We can’t do that.

Let me share with you some of the servicing. To pay interest on our total debt – because we pay interest on our total debt not our net debt. So on our Visa card, the province’s, in ’23-’24, in order to pay interest on that total debt, we paid \$722,874,800. In ’24-’25, we paid \$815,139,600 on interest, on carrying the total debt. Notice the difference in the increments as we increase.

This year, in ’25-’26, we are paying \$1.2 billion on that. We are paying on interest alone, 16 times more than we pay for our MUN medical school. We are on par with the education of children in our school system. We paid many, many more times than our total budget for Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture. We’re probably 14 or 15 times more than what we provide for the operation of Municipal and Provincial Affairs. That is totally significant.

I would ask one thing, I think our leader and many people had said, one thing that jumped out at me in the last budget, I noticed that I didn’t know there was a \$75,000 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of women achieving the right to vote and hold public office. I’m very proud of that. I have three females in my family, I’m very proud of it.

I looked at that and thought, with those interest figures that I shared with you, I was going to send it out to four female leaders in the District of Bonavista. I wanted to see what their comment was and I wanted to remain unbiased. I sent it to one in Bonavista, a leader for a not-for-profit: It’s

frivolous, isn't it? Do you know what we can do with \$75,000 – and she lists on. I sent one in Bloomfield: To be honest, I am more than pleased that women achieved this goal but I don't feel that we need to spend dollars on it right now. Money can be spent in better ways, in my opinion. A third lady up the Peninsula further: I would like to see it directly impact the people.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly another honour to get up here and speak on the budget. Again, it gives you a chance to speak of things in our district. Yesterday or the day before, I did get up and I spoke about the health care situation in our district. I spoke about roads.

Today, I'd like to speak about some secondary industry. A big secondary industry that we're missing in areas of 10, 11 and 12, in the forestry sector is secondary processing in those areas, in forest area management 10, 11 and 12.

That's known as the fibre basket of Central Newfoundland. Back in 2018, this government – which was a good thing, by the way – unlocked 280,000 cubic metres of fibre from the old Abitibi permits. Today, locals can't get permits. They're all distributed to the three bigger players.

Now, for a local to get a permit – I see the former minister over there of FFA looking at me and staring at me and trying to stare me down, but in order for locals to get a permit, there are options there to get a permit – and I've said this before, there are options there to get a permit. But the permits that they give are up in the mountains, up in the hills. Again, you'd need four billy goats to go cut it, to bring it down.

That's why they can't get permits. They are not allotted it. But all the good fibre in the

flatlands, in the good areas, the good spruce, the good fibre, is in 10, 11 and 12, and that's where they all congregate. The entire industry, basically, is congregated in 10, 11 and 12.

Why? Because of the terrain, because easy access and certainly the great fibre. That's why they're there. Now, we do have forest industry. We do. We have it throughout the Island. We have to protect our forest industry, I do agree.

But the forest industries in secondary processing, there's one in area 6 congregating in 10, 11 and 12. There's one in forest management 2 congregating in 10, 11 and 12. I think the next area would be 22 – I can be corrected. If the former minister would get up and correct me on that, he certainly can. But I'm going to say 22. Where are they congregated? It is 10, 11 and 12. All the fibre – you know we're living in Central Newfoundland. I'm from Bishop's Falls. I know my colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor spoke on it this morning, when we look around all we see is trees, timber, lots of it, but we have no secondary processing.

We cannot get substantial permits to get at it because it's being cut, taken out of areas 10, 11, 12 and taken to the other secondary processing throughout the Island. Again, I'm not knocking that secondary processing in other areas, I'm really not, but we have to find the ways to support the secondary processing of industry, of our forestry, in what we what I call Central Newfoundland, which is area 10, 11 and 12.

Back when Abitibi did close down, we were in dire straits or thought we were, but the people in Central Newfoundland were resilient. Through other businesses, through other means, we got through it, easy. We got through it pretty good, actually. I contribute a lot of that probably to aquaculture on the South Coast where Central Newfoundland became the hub for the aquaculture industry and other fishing industries as well, certainly, they became the hub. But the secondary industry in forestry wasn't there.

When Abitibi did close down, as I mentioned, there was an allotment of forest left there. That was to be used for secondary processing in, again, Central Newfoundland, 10, 11 and 12 area. That's gone. There's nothing left. There are no permits to obtain, other than if somebody wants to go up in those hills and those mountains with their billy goats and bring down the lumber, the timber, then they can get their permits.

So we have the three big players that are congregated in 10, 11 and 12, moving the timber, forestry out of Central Newfoundland – which again, I stated, we certainly have to sustain our forest industry. Having said that, are they cutting it faster than we can grow it? There's a lot coming out. Can we restore it fast enough to sustain what's coming out of there? That's a question that government can certainly ask, and I'll certainly ask that in Estimates tomorrow.

But that's one of the industries, Speaker, that we'd like to see more emphasis put on for areas 10, 11 and 12. We believe that there can be an industry in Central Newfoundland, in the area of 10, 11 and 12, other than just being cut and taken away in raw product, whereas we could have a secondary product in Central Newfoundland.

I think there have been some ideas that have been floated around, but so far there has been no avail of it. Again, every time the five-year plan comes out that all the permits are probably distributed elsewhere because of the three big players coming in and congregating on the 10, 11 and 12 Central Newfoundland area and taking all the fibre out.

We see it every day. We see trucks going east, we see trucks going west, truckload upon truckload, log upon log. Every day we see those trucks and they are transporting the raw timber out of our 10, 11 and 12. We certainly need more emphasis put back in 10, 11 and 12 on a secondary process, as was there in the beginning. That's something that we do miss in Central Newfoundland. We certainly miss that.

So that's something, Speaker, in the budget that I didn't see anything there for Central Newfoundland again with regard to the forest industry, to maintain and develop our forestry in Central Newfoundland, which is well needed, and would help with more jobs, economic development, get things moving and growing in Central Newfoundland, and that could certainly prosper the area.

Even the spin-offs of that from industry, like I mentioned the aquaculture down on the South Coast, that were spin-offs for jobs in the hub of Grand Falls-Windsor, and even in Gander – the bigger hubs – that were spin-off jobs and maintain employment and things for everybody in the area, and we could certainly have that back again with an allotment of forestry in Central Newfoundland for some secondary processing.

With that, Speaker, I did mention health care yesterday. I spoke on the roads. I will touch on the roads again I guess, because I sort of didn't get a big time to speak on the roads, but roads are very important in my district. They are very important in everybody's district. It's the main transport to employment. It's the main transport to health care. It's the main transport for whatever we want to do in the area, especially outlying areas.

On Route 350 – I mentioned it before – it is in terrible condition. I did this year, again as I did in the past five years or six years actually – you know, every year we put in our allotment of what are your worst areas. Every year, I pick out the same three spots, the same three areas on Route 350, because they've never been touched.

So, again, I put it in again this year. I put in, I believe, 4.5 kilometres in one spot, another 4.5 kilometres in another spot and another 3 kilometres in another section of Route 350. That's 12 kilometres. I've been applying for this for the past five years.

Now this year, I've been lucky. On Route 350, I'm getting 4.5 kilometres on one of the sections in six years on Route 350; not like Route 340 and Route 360, Route 350 is

getting 4.5 kilometres. When I look in the road plans for Route 340 and I see paving sections from Lewisporte to Loon Bay on Route 340 – you know what district that is – you get 20 kilometres and there are more besides that. When you look at Route 360, that's another Liberal district actually, and you get some paving sections there.

I didn't get the breakdown of Route 360 but, again, they've gotten pavement every year. I don't know what kilometres they may be getting this year. I can't say because I didn't get the breakdown. I asked for the breakdown but I didn't get it. That's Route 340 at least is getting 15 kilometres; Route 360, I'll say probably 10 kilometres. I don't know. I'm just going to be nice about it. What does Exploits get for Route 350? What do Exploits get in five years on Route 350: 4.5 kilometres.

AN HON. MEMBER: Imagine, 10,000 kilometres of road.

P. FORSEY: Right.

I know the former minister can say we did well in Exploits, b'y. We've done Route 360, yes, Sir. We've put a lot of pavement on Route 360. Guess what? Route 360 comes off the Trans-Canada Highway and heads to Bay d'Espoir –

AN HON. MEMBER: His district.

P. FORSEY: His district by the way, down Route 360. Even though mine does go down Bay d'Espoir Highway 40 kilometres, that's the boundary that we have. Route 360 goes right down the Connaigre Peninsula.

So, anyway, with that, we certainly need those sections done. I'd ask the minister – I really would ask the minister – I did receive the 4.5 kilometres supposed to be done this year unless the tenders probably come back too low or the tendering process don't work out for them, I'm supposed to get the 4.5 kilometres, but there's another section that's very, very poor. That would be another section on Route 350. It's a section called dump hill between the middle intersection of

Botwood and into, probably, the bridge in Northern Arm.

It has been accidents there, people busting tires there, having trouble there and I put in for that section, as well as the other section that I'm getting on Route 350, for the past five years –

AN HON. MEMBER: The billy goats go over it themselves.

P. FORSEY: You'd need to be a billy goat to go over that too. Yes, you do. Thank you, Minister, for pointing that out. That's the former Transportation minister telling me that actually, by the way, that we need a billy goat to be walking over it. Wow.

Thank you for reminding me of that, former minister of Transportation.

So, anyway, that section needs to be fixed and, obviously, the former minister knows this. He just said it. He just admitted it. This section really needs to be fixed and we need attention given to that.

Look, while they got the trucks and the equipment in on Route 350 that's going to be there or should be there, they're going to be doing roadwork, they're going to be doing pavement, even if they went out to the other section from Botwood to Northern Arm there on that three kilometres, I do believe it is, from the middle of the intersection in Botwood to Northern Arm bridge, and just capped it over – if they can't afford to do the full roadwork right now, just cap it over. You've got your equipment in place. You've got it already there. While they're there, Minister, why don't you just go and cap it over until we can afford more in the next road plans so that we can have these roads fixed? That's all it would take, Minister.

Anyway, I'm hoping the minister is going to address that. I'll certainly have more conversations with the minister on that so we can address the roadwork that we need done in the district. So that's the road parts of it. Let's see. Let's go back to seniors.

I did put up a petition there yesterday on seniors, and today, certainly, the Seniors' Advocate came out with a report. One thing the Seniors' Advocate stated is that the cost for seniors is a primary barrier of preventing seniors from aging well at home – the cost of living, and she's right. I hear it from seniors all the time: can't afford to heat their home, can't afford to buy groceries, not getting enough to live on can't afford their pills, can't afford their medications.

You know, when I see seniors breaking down medications or not taking their medications or cutting them in half and that kind of stuff to giving up their health care because of the cost of living in their own homes, that is certainly disturbing. It really is when I see the Seniors' Advocate found that 80 per cent of seniors face financial challenges in maintaining their dependence in their own homes. Seniors need help in their own homes, they really do, and the intent for seniors to stay in their own homes keeps them healthy. It's a known fact that seniors live longer in their own homes. They're happier in their own homes.

In 2016, the government cut the hours of home care for seniors and then increased the contribution that the seniors had to pay to have someone look after them in their own homes. Now the Seniors' Advocate comes out with this, just about 10 years later, saying that maintaining their independence in their own homes is a cost, 80 per cent – 10 years later, now, mind you. You knew that back in 2016. You really knew it. You did it.

Now you have seniors that can't stay in their own homes because the cost of it and they can't even get workers. Today I'm hearing from seniors that they can't even get workers out in their own homes because the home care agencies don't have the workers. They don't have the workers? Why? Well, I heard the CEO of NL Health Services say that they're not paid enough anyway. They're not getting compensated enough to go somewhere to look after a senior in their own home, and I've heard that from the workers too, by the way. I've heard the same thing.

So if we're going to look after seniors in their own home and if the CEO of NL Health Services plans to implement some of his Health Accord community care, of taking seniors from the care in the hospitals to keep them in their own homes, then we've got some serious business here of looking after – how is he going to implement that in their own homes when they can't get care right now? They can't afford to stay in their own homes right now. They can't get workers to come see them in their own homes right now. So how are we going to look after our seniors in the near future when we can't get workers to even look after those seniors in their own homes?

With that, Speaker, that's two things that I wanted to talk about with regard to my district. I'm sure and I'm looking forward to another opportunity because there's some potential I can bring up, no doubt there's some potential in the area. I've been looking forward to bringing that up in the near future but there's some other areas in my district that I've been hearing that I'd certainly love another opportunity to get up and speak.

With that, I'll take my seat and give someone else a chance to speak on the budget.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER (Trimper): Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always a great honour to stand in this hon. House and speak on behalf of the people of Placentia West - Bellevue that have, I feel, a strong voice in the fact that the reasons why they have a strong voice is because of communication that I have with the residents of Placentia West - Bellevue.

As my colleague from Harbour Main alluded to in her speech earlier today in this morning's session, it's about communication but it's about bringing the people's voice forward. We are not bringing things forward

on a personal basis. We're bringing things forward to make the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians better.

So I've heard it asked in the House several times over the last week or so. The question really is, are you better off now than you were 10 years ago when this administration came into government and started running the province?

For the people of Placentia West - Bellevue, I think that they've spoken loudly and clearly and that would have to say no. Because we're a very industrial district that has been left out of improving the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. At one point, they were getting ready to shut down the refinery, which we know now that being remediated cost \$1.6 billion and got infused into the economy. There was a lot of spinoffs. It was a great benefit. Like I said, it's not for me to deliberate, I guess, on the business plan or anything like that, but there are some things there that, when we're doing things that are tied to the environment, we have to make sure that we're going about it the right way.

One thing I wanted to touch on, and I spoke about it on Monday when I spoke to the budget, and that's about the whole idea of the disability advocate. Being the former shadow Cabinet minister or critic for CSSD, and now my colleague from Harbour Main has taken up that charge, but we communicate all the time, and I think that's the reason why there hasn't been any discontinuation of support for our disability community, because over here on this side, we're communicating with each other.

Our leader, if you have any questions, he will weigh in on everything that we're doing and how we approach it, and how we look at it, because he has a very great depth of knowledge that we can draw from. Like I said, his presence in our caucus is greatly admired. I take my hat off to the Leader of the Official Opposition for being involved with his caucus and his government-in-waiting.

To ignore the cries for a disability advocate and to ignore 30 per cent of our population and to say that we're going to give them \$400 in July, well, \$400 in July don't really help a family that's trying to get their child diagnosed with autism. It's not really helping a person navigate a system that – a lot of times when we're dealing with persons with disabilities, it could be intellectual. So therefore, they need an advocate to be able to help them navigate the system. That's what we are asking for.

We heard from the Minister of CSSD earlier today saying about folding in the disability advocate with the Seniors' Advocate. While that might sound rosy on the surface, it's not practical whatsoever, for the simple fact that the disability advocate needs to be more like an advocacy office, not a policy office as we see with the Seniors' Advocate, which is doing a great job accumulating information from the people that they represent.

I also put my hat off to the organization SeniorsNL because they have become then somewhat of an extension to being somewhat of an advocate, but again, that's not what their job was set up to do. So that's the reason why we've been pushing for five years or more about a disability advocate and we were instrumental on making sure that we replaced the Child and Youth Advocate, which is doing tremendous – work – and, again, to Mrs. Walsh for taking on being a Seniors' Advocate and making sure that seniors' voices are being heard, but also that policies are being implemented in order to make life better for seniors.

So, again, the question is, are you better off today than you were 10 years ago? The disability community would say no, for the simple fact that they need a voice; they need an office that can help them navigate our health care system and different programming. How many people are out there right now with a disability that are entitled or eligible for funding to help them live their best life but are unaware because they're not able to navigate the system and they might have other complex needs or issues that they don't have an advocate

there? Maybe they don't have family members here. There are different reasons.

But if we have an office of the disability advocate, then that means that that information is housed in one area. People don't have to be redundant about giving back their information, and then they have somebody that can help them navigate the system, whether that be appointments or understand the programming or understanding anything that needs to go on for the entire continuum of care that somebody with a disability would need.

Again, I say that is accounting right now in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for 30 per cent of our population. That brings them to almost 200,000 people. That is an awful lot of people, and they need an advocate and they need an advocacy office just so that they know how to navigate the system and understand the system as it applies to them.

But when we've been asking them for it for five years and I hear the minister get up in her spot today and say, just getting the chance to look at it, five years later – wow. I'm glad to know that you're taking it serious. I'm glad we know that we put our trust in the government opposite. Are you better off now than you were 10 years ago? I say no.

As a parent, again, for a person with a disability, I'd say it's time to stop kicking this can down the road. These people need us. As the Official Opposition and our leader has stated, we support this initiative and given a new government, the PCs will implement a disability advocate right away.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: I thank my leader and my colleagues in the Official Opposition, and my colleague from Harbour Main, for taking up this cause and for us being all in agreement that this is something that's essential to helping our province run more efficiently and smoothly and help these people navigate a system that they probably don't understand at this point – lots of

people might out of that 200,000 but I'll guarantee you that it's an awful lot of people.

Even if we say it was 10 per cent, we're still talking about 20,000 people – that don't know how to navigate the system. So let's get out there and let's make sure that we're looking after those people. Again, are you better off now or 10 years ago? I would say that we are not better off today than we were 10 years ago.

Today, we celebrate Earth Day and I was fortunate enough, actually, to do the response to the Ministerial Statement by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. The last sentence on the minister's statement says: I encourage everyone in this House to remember that we have just one Earth. It's incumbent on us as leaders to ensure we do our best to protect it. Well, I don't know if we're living by our words but we're certainly not doing it in Swift Current.

Swift Current, back on February 5, 2025, more than 70 days ago, we had a transport truck that was travelling about 6 a.m. in the morning, wasn't familiar with the road, went off on a turn in Swift Current and the truck went down over the embankment. The truck was actually carrying tarpaulin so the issue wasn't about what it was carrying or anything –

AN HON. MEMBER: It wasn't the load.

J. DWYER: It wasn't the load, that's right.

So when it left the road, it ruptured its fuel tanks. It spilled over 700 litres of diesel on the ground and, of course, you go out and you start remediating. You get the authorities involved, everything's being reported and all this kind of stuff or whatever, but then we come to find out that there was no insurance. After over \$300,000 was spent on remediation, the company realized, that was doing the remediation, that they wouldn't be able to continue the cleanup because nobody was taking responsibility financially.

So of course I approached the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and I asked her, what is the situation here? Really, what I was asking for was that we remediate the diesel spill now and go after the administration or the costs or whatever later because we can do that vicariously but the environment really can't wait. So when I hear a statement of: I encourage everyone in this house to remember that we have just one earth. It's incumbent on us as leaders to ensure that we do our best to protect it. Well, we had a carbon tax that was supposed to fix the environment.

We over on this side are after being called climate deniers but, apparently, the initiative of protecting the environment is about who can we make responsible for it and who can we make pay for it. So it's a money grab. It's got nothing to do with the environment because guess what? When we found that there was no insurance by the truck driver, all cleanup had ceased. Can you imagine? One drop of diesel contaminates 250 gallons of water. They had a boom out in Swift Current harbour, a very strong salmon run, and when we found out after spending \$300,000 that nobody was paying for it, even the boom came up out of the water.

Can you imagine? The company shouldn't have been on the hook for that to get reimbursed, because as we know about MTAP program, getting reimbursed is not going to be easy, but to spend that kind of money on cleanup and to be that close to it – the lady adjacent to the property has chickens. She has some livestock and stuff to help her family, but there's a whole host of reasons. This is how she approached me.

This actually came to me in March but this was to bring me up to speed on where we were: Hi Jeff, I would like to write to you with a concern/complaint about an incident that occurred at my property in Swift Current on February 5. A transport truck went off the road and spilt 700 litres of diesel, which is on video, around my property. The diesel has gone into the soil and ocean and the environment services has placed a boom out in the water to catch the diesel until clean up is complete.

The issue is the trucking company that caused the spill has no insurance and because of this, all cleanup efforts have been stopped. The boom has ruptured and there is debris everywhere: all over the beach, the roadway and in the trees. I have been in touch with NL services in Clarenville who advised me to call the Environment and Climate Change Department, which I did. They directed me to NL services in St. John's so, long story short, I was advised by NL services that no one is taking responsibility for this cleanup at this time and they are looking into taking legal action against the pollutant who may face fines and jail time.

In the meantime, who is going to clean up the mess that is on site now from the boom? Why is the government not footing the bill to getting this cleaned up completely instead of letting more damage be done? I have livestock on site and I am concerned that they will get sick from the contaminated soil.

She goes on to talk about having dizziness and stuff like that. We did an interview with NTV and we brought it to the attention of government and the province, I guess kind of thing, but to me it's very bothersome to hear that – this if from the minister in her statement today about Earth Day – I encourage everyone in the House to remember that we have just one earth. It's incumbent on us all as leaders to ensure we do our best to protect it. So at this point in time I guess we're not leading; we're not remediating.

So I'm not sure what the next option is for the people because I've even met with the LSD. I've met with the fire department. This has really put people out and I will say that the ecosystem around Swift Current is very unique. I am going to tell you it's one of the most scenic places, certainly in my district, but I would commend the province. While I know Terra Nova is pretty beautiful as well, and the West Coast – the whole province is beautiful – but I have this nice little, kind of diamond in the rough, we'll say.

I'd like to make a shoutout actually to Roger Jamieson, who has recently passed. We

gave him an honorary award at the Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador Convention based on his lifelong work with tourism here in the province.

So I want to say to Mary and Hope and – I'm after losing his name – their son that Roger is very instrumental in our province for tourism, and being the shadow cabinet minister now for Tourism, I do understand all the work that he had done and worked with him in our district to make things better as well.

Like I said, that was something that was done, but again, a segway from the topic that I'm talking about on the environment, but because Roger was so instrumental in Swift Current, I just wanted to make sure that that was mentioned.

But to ignore this cleanup is really not taking any leadership. It's not doing anything to forward the fact that, you know, we talk about this administration stepped across and voted to get the carbon tax, then they started writing letters to the prime minister that carbon tax wasn't good and all this kind of stuff. But was it all about carbon tax or the environment, or was it about a money grab, or was it just another way of saying this is a way for us to grab money? Because if that was the case, then I guess the administration that's here in Newfoundland and Labrador are following it full suit.

So I really do have problems with that. Like I said, to stand here today and say it's incumbent on us as leaders to ensure we do our best to protect it, referring to the environment, I think is a little bit of a sin. Again, are you better off now or 10 years ago? I don't think we're better off today than we were 10 years ago. Because if we're all pushing an environmental agenda and we're not going to clean up a diesel spill, then it's pretty hypocritical as far as I am concerned. I don't think there's any need for it in our society today.

Like I said, let's get out there. I would say to the government, let's get out and clean it up and then go after the administrative cost or

whoever needs to be responsible later and we'll take care of that that way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Again, the last thing I will say is that, as our leader said, we have all these ideas and we hear about all these plans, but if we're not executing the plans – a plan is only as good as the execution that it gets or receives. So, to me, if we are failing to plan, then that is exactly the reason why we are planning to fail. That seems to be the light of this administration, is that there are lots of plans but no substance.

On that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my place.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I now recognize the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm glad to have an opportunity to speak to the amended budget motion.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to continue on for a little bit on the theme that I spoke to the first time in the budget and, again, it's around our province's finances. Once again, it's important to realize, and I appreciate the fact that all Members, including this Member, we all want what's best for our district. Naturally, we have a job to do in terms of advocating for roadwork, water and sewer, infrastructure, recreational infrastructure, all those things, and everybody does that. But there is also a reality when it comes to governing.

I've heard people say before, it's easier on this side and, in many respects, I would agree with that. Even though we work hard over here too, it is easy to be critical of everything and to say there's not enough of this and there's not enough of that or so on, when you're not the one who ultimately has to make those choices. I say that regardless

of who the government is and what political stripe they may be.

There is a reality, again, in this province. My colleague from Bonavista referenced it today, as I did the day before yesterday, and that is our tremendous provincial debt. A net debt now of, I believe it's \$19 billion-plus, and I think \$30 billion to \$32 billion in terms of total debt, and the fact that we're paying \$1.2 billion, with a B, this year, just on debt servicing costs alone. Just think about what we could do with that \$1.2 billion. Think of all the schools that we could build, doctors we could hire, nurses, roads that could be paved and so on, if that money wasn't being paid on debt servicing.

With that, I think we have to be ever cognizant of the need to try to get the debt under control, to try to get the debt down, and if we can get the debt down, then obviously that's less money we're going to be paying on debt servicing and more money we're going to have to spend.

Now, it's very easy to say that too, given the fact that we haven't had a balanced budget – I can't remember the last time we had a balanced budget. I believe it was back in the Dunderdale administration – I not sure if we had it then. As a matter of fact, when barrels of oil were like at \$125 a barrel, we were still borrowing money, which when you think about it, it's kind of crazy. I can remember standing on this side of the House at the time and referring it to the minister of Finance of the time, the billion-dollar shopping spree, is how I framed it, given the fact that we had \$125 a barrel, lots of money pouring in and we were still borrowing money then and driving our debt out of control even further.

It's important that we have a plan, moving forward, of how we're going to deal with this anchor around our neck. One of the things that certainly comes to mind – and I don't know where the Upper Churchill negotiations are going to go. I don't know where they're going to go. We've been told when the MOU was debated here in the House of Assembly, we were told that it was going to bring in, on average, a billion

dollars a year between now and 2041. I think it starts off at \$500 million or \$600 million and then eventually goes to \$1.6 billion or something like that in 2041 and if you average, it out it's a billion dollars a year.

One thing I would like to see, whether it's this administration or whether it's a new administration – and I guess we'll find out soon enough when we have a provincial election, how that's going to pan out, but I think that should the Upper Churchill come to fruition – and we're far from there, because it's only an MOU. There are no definitive agreements. Who knows what the definitive agreements are going to look like. Who knows whether they would be supported by the House of Assembly. I'm not sure if they even need to be, but if they will and supported by the people, whether or not Quebec will even be in a position – because I'm not sure what's going to happen in Quebec, if they're going to end up with a new government or not.

So there are a lot of unknowns as to whether this comes to fruition and we actually see that billion dollars a year, on average, for 2025, I believe it is, to 2041. So if it did, that would be \$16 billion. Now, I'll say to our current Minister of Finance, whether she's there or not when the time comes, who knows, but to my mind, we should be looking at that between now and 2041, if it happens, that's \$16 billion that we would not have had. It's like found money. I mean, it's not found money but you could treat it like found money.

We just saw the West White Rose Project now. The topsides are going to be put on now from Argentina, out there, and there's going to be more oil coming in from that. So we should have some good years – and all the mining projects – ahead of us where I would argue that we should be able to manage this province without dipping into that Upper Churchill money, if it should come to fruition. So, to my mind, what an opportunity, between now and 2041 if that money comes through, to pay off our provincial debt. What an opportunity.

Now I've got my doubts. I've got my doubts it's going to happen because I know the temptation. The minute that money comes to fruition – if it does – all of a sudden, oh, we need more of this. We need more of that. We want more housing, more schools, more hospitals, more doctors and on and on and on it goes.

We know the pressures will be there but imagine if the government, whoever that government is, actually had the discipline – actually had the discipline if this happens – to say, do you know what? This is brand new money that was never there before. It was never expected. We're going to pay off that debt or at least, if we're not going to put it all on debt, let's put a big portion of that money on the debt; given the fact that we're managing all along; given the fact, like I said, there are going to be more revenues coming in now with minerals, with oil and so on, it's a real opportunity.

Now I know that's not necessarily related to this budget but I wanted to get it on the record because I think it's important for our province's future. I think it's important for our children and for our grandchildren to get that anchor from around our collective neck. What a legacy. What a legacy to leave to our children then if we could somehow manage to eliminate that unsustainable debt that's growing year over year over year and currently costing us \$1.2 billion in debt servicing.

That might not sound exciting. It's certainly not as exciting or as politically sexy as building recreational facilities and brand new schools and infrastructure and all that. It may not be as politically popular and the temptation will be there to blow through it all just like we did when we were at \$125 a barrel. The temptation will be there. I just hope again the government of the day has the discipline, and I hope that government can set a framework now. Even this administration to set a framework, to set forth a plan that, should all this Upper Churchill money start flowing to the province – should it happen – a significant portion of that money is going on debt repayment.

Speaker, I wanted to now switch to a couple of other issues. One here, this is not an ask in terms of spending anymore of taxpayers' money here, but I wanted to take the opportunity to raise this because we all know the importance of student assistants in this province and the importance of them to our education system.

Certainly, I acknowledge that in this budget the government has invested heavily in teachers and student assistants. In my opinion, it's a wise investment. It's an important investment. Albeit it's more cost but it is a good investment and it's something I've heard from so many parents over the years, we all have, about the lacking resources in our schools. So I think it's important that we had to do that but one of the issues that we have with student assistants, and I've heard from a number of student assistants over the last couple of years actually, is the fact that they're not getting paid. They're not getting paid on time. They're not getting paid the hours that they're owed. I'm constantly hearing from them.

I've checked with the Department of Education and, apparently, they are not on the same payroll system as what the teachers are on. They're on some other payroll system, which I was told by a senior staff person in the department, is referred to as an old antiquated system. So you have student assistants, they're not making great money to begin with, albeit they have a very important role to play and, arguably, they're not making enough money to get people to do the job, certainly.

They're not compensated enough I think a lot of people might argue but if they are, like anybody, when you go to work you ought to expect that when payday rolls around that whatever hours you worked is in your bank account. That's a reasonable expectation. There is nobody in this province in public service or private industry that would disagree with the fact that if somebody gets up and they go to work and they do their job, when payday comes around, they expect whatever they're owed to be deposited in their bank account.

We have an ongoing issue with the Department of Education of not getting student assistants paid what they're owed. I have numerous examples of student assistants who have faced that issue where they're owed hours. Maybe they work X number of hours and they're short. Then they go through this whole process of trying to contact payroll. They may or may not get a hold of someone. Someone might get back to them in a few days time and they'll say, okay, we'll straighten it out next payday. Next payday it might get straightened out or it might not. If it does get straightened out, they straightened out the last payday and now they screwed up this payday because of the antiquated payroll system.

Here you are with student assistants having to – I had a student assistant come into my office. She had a book and she'd have to write down the dates, the times, how many hours she worked and so on and then she's got to reconcile that with her pay stub – well, actually, that's another issue. She can't reconcile it with her pay stub because the pay stub doesn't even state the hours worked or the amount of pay. The pay stub is even incomplete so it's not like you can even sort of match up the hours worked with the hours on the pay stub because the pay stub is not even complete.

So now you're trying to figure out, well, if I got paid that much, they must have paid me for – you're here doing the math to figure out how many hours you got paid for and how many you didn't and so on. I'm telling you and I would say it to the minister, it is a problem. I've talked to senior officials; I'm not making this up. I can tell you I'm not making it up.

S. COADY: Yeah. It's not acceptable.

P. LANE: It's not acceptable, no. It's not.

So I would say to the minister – I think it is the Minister of Finance even though they're under the Department of Education. I think it's Finance. I could be wrong who's doing the – I guess it's Finance doing the payroll.

S. COADY: I'm finding out.

P. LANE: But I would ask the minister to look into it.

S. COADY: I am.

P. LANE: Well, there you go, the minister said she is. Because it is ongoing, and it's not fair.

The other thing – I've got five minutes – I wanted to touch on and I've brought this up in the past and it is still an issue. I don't think it was addressed in the budget. I didn't see it in the budget. Maybe the minister is going to tell me it is addressed in the budget; I just didn't see it or it wasn't specifically detailed: home care.

We all understand the importance of home care to seniors and not just seniors, but anyone who requires it – and certainly I can speak to the metro area. Generally speaking, in the metro area, home care agencies are utilized most of the time. Back in, I want to say December 2024, within about a year or so ago, government provided an increase to home care agencies so that they could pay their workers more money.

Because quite frankly, it's pretty sad when a home care worker is making about the same as someone who works pouring a coffee in a retail location. You've got someone now who's got to look after your mom or your dad, sometimes fairly complex care for some people. It's not just sitting with them; it's changing wounds and all the types of medical procedures and so on and getting paid very poorly for it.

So the government did recognize that finally about a year or so ago and they gave more to the home care agencies so they could pay their staff more money to do the job – fine. The problem is, not everybody uses home care agencies, particularly in, say, rural areas, there probably are no home care agencies in some of these areas. They do what's known as self-managed care.

They've got to try to find an individual to look after their mom or their dad or whatever, or they've got to find someone to look after themselves. They can't pick up the phone and call the home care agency; they've got to find someone in the community or whatever that's willing to come in and look after them. Then they have to manage it themselves. That could be somewhat onerous in terms of the paperwork and the payroll and it's a lot to put on somebody to have to deal with, quite frankly, but they have to deal with it.

Well, those individuals, unlike the increase in pay to people that work for a home care agency, a home care worker that's just working for a person who's self-managing, they didn't get any increase. So, again, there's right and there's wrong. There's fair and there's unfair.

I challenge anybody in this House of Assembly to tell me that if there was a recognition that home care workers in an agency are not making enough money to incentivize them to come and work to care for our seniors and people who require it, what makes someone in a self-managed situation any different. A home care worker is a home care worker is a home care worker, whether they work directly for me as the client or whether they work for me in an agency, it's exactly the same thing. So why do we have that discrepancy in pay?

I was hoping we'd see it addressed in this budget. I didn't see it in the speech. I didn't see it in the budget. Maybe it's hidden there some where, and I'd love for the minister or someone to stand up and tell me that it's been addressed.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Next speaker.

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

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Speaker.

As Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, it's a pleasure again to get up and speak on the budget. I just want to reiterate how I feel about the budget. I feel that it's an urban, not a rural budget. There's a lot of things that are lacking in that budget that affect my district and other districts around this province.

I think it's a very unfair process. Like we said before, everything in the budget should be based on needs, whatever part of the province. We can't have a political election budget dictating to one part of the province opposing the other parts.

So I want to just briefly touch on health care again. Before I get into the negative aspect, I just want to throw in a little bit of a happier occasion that happened to me in the district a while back. I had the pleasure to go into a home in Musgrave Harbour and present a 92-year-old gentleman and his 90-year-old wife a 69th wedding anniversary celebration, which we present them with the 75th anniversary medal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: And you should've seen the happiness that was in that room. They had family members there, and I thought it was one of the nicest feelings that you could get. When we speak negatively about seniors and what they're going through, this is the kind of environment that our seniors should be placed in, whether it be in a long-term care facility or those who want to stay in their homes.

Then there are a lot of seniors – I've visited a lot of homes in the district since I've been elected and I heard lots of stories. I heard a lot of people pretty upset, almost to the point of crying. Please, see if you can get some funding so that we can live peacefully in our own homes. We don't want to leave our homes.

The problem is that they're not getting enough support for home care. I spoke about this before in the House and I'll speak about it again. We have to go back to the budget. If it's not in there, we have to look at

more funding to put into home care for our seniors and also increase pay to the home care workers so that they can support the seniors with the care that they need.

This really helps out with health because this takes a lot of burden off some of those long-term care facilities. It also brings in mental stability to the seniors to know that they are looked after and they're happy in their own homes.

So those are the things we have to consider and focus on if we want to make it more comfortable in this province for our seniors. Like I said before, those are the people who helped build this province and put us here we are today. We should go back and show some more respect than what we're showing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: Now, when we're talking about health care, there are many things that are tied into health care, even down to transportation and infrastructure. It's tied into every aspect of our districts and the province.

I'll just read off a list of some diversions that took place today with the Health Department: "Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) Health Services advises the public of a temporary disruption of routine medical imaging (X-ray) services at Lewisporte Health Centre from: Friday, April 11 at 8:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

"If routine medical imaging services are required, patients may choose to travel to Gander or Grand Falls-Windsor."

Another diversion: Lewisporte Health Centre, Lewisporte, Thursday, April 17, 4 p.m. until Friday, April 18 at 8:00 a.m. In case of emergencies patients with a medical emergency who require an ambulance should call 911. "Those who feel they have a serious or urgent medical problem should proceed to their nearest emergency department."

"Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Centre, Botwood: Friday, April 11, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

"A.M. Guy Memorial Health Centre, Buchans: Saturday, April 12, from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.; Sunday, April 13, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Wednesday, April 16, at 6:00 p.m. until Friday, April 18, at 8:00 a.m.

"Connaigre Peninsula Health Centre, Harbour Breton: Monday, April 14 at 8:00 a.m. until Tuesday, April 15 at 8:00 a.m."

"A.M. Memorial Health Centre, Buchans: Friday, April 4 at 8:00 a.m. until Thursday, April 10 at 4:00 p.m.

"Baie Verte Peninsula Health Centre, Baie Verte: Sunday, April 6 at 8:00 a.m. until Monday, April 7 at 8:00 a.m.; Tuesday, April 8 at 8:00 a.m. until Wednesday, April 9 at 8:00 a.m.; Thursday, April 10 at 8:00 a.m. until Friday, April 11 at 8:00 a.m."

"Dr. Y.K. Jeon Kittiwake Health Centre, New-Wes-Valley: Friday, April 4 at 8:00 a.m. until Saturday, April 5 at 8:00 a.m.; Tuesday, April 8 at 8:00 a.m. until Thursday, April 10 at 8:00 a.m."

"... Dr. Y.K. Jeon Kittiwake Health Centre in New-Wes-Valley will be unavailable **until further notice**. If routine X-ray services are required, patients may choose to travel to Gander or Grand Falls-Windsor."

Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services advise the public of a temporary disruption of routine laboratory service, walk-in blood clinic, at Norte Dame Memorial Health Centre in Twillingate. If routine laboratory services are required, patients may choose to travel to Gander or Grand Falls.

That's the list of diversions. That tells us that there are a lot of problems in the health care system. We're definitely not moving forward by any means. We're just sort of dragging our heels and hoping for the best, I guess.

Now I want to change the narrative a little bit. I want to go back to something I never

talked about much when I spoke the other day and that's the tourism in our district. Transportation and infrastructure is very crucial to tourism. From Cape Freels to Fogo Island, we have a lot to offer for tourism. I'm going to start listing off some of the tourism attractions in the District of Fogo Island - Cape Freels and just give you some perspective on what we're missing out on in terms of transportation and infrastructure.

We start off with Farewell on this side of the mainland. You go to Farewell and you can get on the ferry and enjoy a very scenic ferry ride. That's only when the ferry is operating because most times she's not making the crossings. Stop by Fogo Island at a place called Man O'War Cove, and just a few minutes down the road is the interpretation centre which gives you all the info to Fogo Island tourism attractions.

We'll start with the Town of Fogo. Fogo has three hiking trails: Lion's Den, Waterman's Brook and Northside trail. You can visit the Bleak House which was part of Earle Sons and Company years ago when the fish trade was on the go. They have the Old School House Museum and the old United church. Seldom-Come-By, a community you pass on your way down across the Island, right there we have a Marine Information Centre at the old FU Trading Company. That has a museum in it like the day you walked in when the store was in operations, all the old antiques are there on the shelves, all the rolls of paper and everything like that.

Right next door they have the Cod Liver Oil Factory. You can go into the liver factory and all the old drums and everything are still there and you can actually smell the liver even up to today.

AN HON. MEMBER: Wow.

J. MCKENNA: Yeah. That's facts.

Then you make your way down to the eastern part of the island – and by the way, to do a whole tour of Fogo Island, believe it or not, it entails about 180 kilometres of driving to and from – you go into a place called Shoal Bay and they have what you

call the Herring Cove museum and you can practically buy anything there that's connected with the culture of Fogo Island, like other communities and everything like that, and right there, we also have the service of a big Foodland grocery store, just to give you a heads up on that one.

Then you make your way to Barr'd Islands and Joe Batt's Arm.

AN HON. MEMBER: Great place.

J. MCKENNA: That's the one for you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yup.

J. MCKENNA: We have hiking trails there. Etheridges Point, which carries out a festival yearly, and we have a walking trail that takes you down to the famous Great Auk. It's really, really worth the trip. We have the old Brett House there. We have Luke's Landing. We have boat tours that leave from Joe Batt's Arm; you can go out to see all the icebergs, all the puffins and the whales and what have you.

Then we can go to another community farther down to the eastern part of the island, that's Tilting Harbour. We have a nice sandy beach there that a lot of people take advantage of in the summer with nice warm weather. We also have Dwyer Premises there and Turpin's trail.

Down in Joe Batt's Arm we also have the Growlers ice cream. The ice cream is made right on the spot and I'll tell you, flavours like you've never taste before. Then we have the famous Fogo Island Inn which brings in millions of dollars to the economy, not only from what they're taking in, but the local tourism that comes in there just because they want to see the Fogo Island Inn, where it is, get a tour done and go in for a meal or what have you. They employ up to 140 people with spin-offs and everything else from that Shorefast foundation.

Then you can leave to come back and take the ferry ride to scenic Change Islands, and Change Islands has a couple of really

interesting things there. It has the Newfoundland Pony Sanctuary –

AN HON. MEMBER: That's on Change Islands?

J. MCKENNA: That's on Change Islands. You have The Olde Shoppe Museum, which I don't think there's anything in the world that's not in there. I've never seen anything like it before in my life, and I've been in a lot of museums. Then we have what we call the famous squid jigging ground. You can get aboard the boat and go out and jig a few squids, like the old song, the "Squid Jiggin' Ground."

So then we take the ferry back to Farewell and we go to Gander Bay. We have hiking trails in Gander Bay, we have the great Gander River and the salmon anglers there. We have Carmanville Wetlands Interpretation Centre in the Carmanville area. We have the Deadman's Bay Provincial Park. Hold on, I've got more listings here.

Then we make our way to Musgrave Harbour and we have the Banting Park, the Fishermen's Museum, beautiful sandy beaches and A Day's Getaway trailer park. Then you make your way to Lumsden. You have the Windmill Bight Park RV campground.

Then you go to Cape Freels, where you'll, again, get into the nice sandy beaches, and then you'll make your way up to New-Wes-Valley, that area, and you get into a place in Lumsden where they have the Windmill Bight Park RV campground, and the beautiful sandy beaches there as well. They bring in a lot of tourists. There are a lot of people that go there, set up their trailers for the summer and so on and so forth. Then we're going up to the New-Wes-Valley, which includes Brookfield, Valleyfield, Badger's Quay –

AN HON. MEMBER: Wesleyville.

J. MCKENNA: Wesleyville. I take it you have some association with that.

AN HON. MEMBER: My mother's from there.

J. MCKENNA: There you go.

We have the Norton's Cove Studio in Brookfield. We have the REACH museum in Wesleyville, and out in Newtown, next door, we have the Barbour Living Heritage Village. We have The Homestead Adventures in Shamblers Cove Road. We have South West Pond Park, RV park, as well we have walking trails. Then when we get to another community called Greenspond, we have the Historical Society and the old courthouse there, and walking trails there as well.

Then we go to another area up from New-Wes-Valley, Indian Bay Municipal Park. They have a beautiful park there. We go to Dover. We have the Dover Fault Interpretation Centre and lookout there. Then we're up to the last part of the district, a place called Hare Bay, and we have the Hare Bay Adventures tours, gift shop, and we have the Hare Bay campground and day-use park.

So when we're talking about transportation and infrastructure, that's the kind of things that we're suffering from. In order to have good tourism and tourist attraction, we need that infrastructure. We need the roads kept up to good standards. We need transportation improvements whether it be by water or road. So when we talk about the budget, those are the things I expected to see, some input into what should go back in to compensate for all the investment we put into Fogo Island - Cape Freels. Like I spoke before, we literally put in hundreds of millions of dollars every year through the fishery and tourism.

It's very, very important that you take a second look at what's in the budget when it comes to road and paving. I have a very, very large, broad district and when you're talking about one, two or three kilometres of paving, for a district of that magnitude, that's not very fair. There's some 10,000 kilometres of paving in the province and we're down to a district that size, right from

Gambo right to Fogo Island, Change Islands, and we're getting one or two kilometres? Unacceptable – unacceptable.

So –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. MCKENNA: Yes, that's it, even if we had our potholes filled up, we would get by until they seen a time they could go down there and do a bit of roadwork. I mean, as I said before, there's a lot of culvert replacement work needs to be done down there. I spoke about the Town of Musgrave Harbour; they have to look after their own main road in the community, and they're barely surviving now on the little tax base that they have, and they're responsible for the upkeep of the road and culverts and, on top of that, snow clearing.

That's what I'm talking about when I'm talking about my district and what needs we have. Anyhow, I'm just about up to my time. In closing, without anything else to say about the budget, I just want to wish everybody a very happy and safe weekend this Easter weekend, whether you're on this side of the House, the other side of the House, all the Members of Parliament, all the support workers and chairpersons and the speakers, have a very safe and enjoyable Easter with family and friends.

Enjoy your Easter break.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I am happy to stand up here. I don't plan on taking the full 20, but I did want to, at least, make a few comments on this year's budget. Again, I don't know what will happen in the weeks to come after here. Sometimes things get caught up and so I said I'll take this afternoon, as we're getting ready to go into Easter, and I'm just going to

make a few comments on some of the stuff I've heard so far and some of my take-aways.

The first thing I will say, Speaker, speaking to this year's budget – I think I did speak to Interim Supply – I've got to give a major shout-out to the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance – I don't think until – certainly, I didn't appreciate it when I was in Opposition but when you get in and realize the pressures that are put on a minister of Finance and a premier, whether it's your caucus colleagues, the Opposition colleagues, just the general public and the competing priorities that are there. At a time when, you know you could easily find a way to justify spending 100 per cent of your budget on health care, when you can spend 100 per cent of the budget on roads, things that are evergreen every year that we continue to increase investment in and sometimes it feels like we wish we could do more.

Same with, no doubt, my department which, again, I wish I had more and more that we could invest into different things, but that's why I give the minister credit. The ability to battle competing priorities and, at a time when it's always easy to add stuff to a budget; it is very hard to remove things from a budget.

Just using my department, for example, just in the last year we've added multiple positions for renewable energy. Those are positions that are new. We have to add those. We have to pay for these individuals, hire these individuals, but that doesn't mean we lost individuals along the way. That doesn't mean that we have something that's now redundant that we don't get rid of. The same thing when we have increased expenditures in other line items and headings.

So, again, I say to the minister, congratulations, I think, on doing – and do you know one of the reasons why? Because one of the only things I'm hearing about is the budget from three years ago. I hear about the sugar tax and you know you've done a good budget when all you're hearing

about is something from three years ago. That's very good.

As someone, again, who was there for *Budget 2016* which was received really well, it really went over well, I point that out because we spent, my God, it felt like months in here, talking about the different things we were forced to do.

I specifically mention the Member for Exploits. He brought up today about home care. I mean home care is something that matters to us all and how it was eliminated in 2016 or something was eliminated in 2016 and not added here, but I will point out one thing, one difference, actually, because we got in – I think the election was November 30, 2015. We got sworn in on the 14th of December and I think we realized on December 22 – normally, it would have been done far before but it was late because of the nature of the election. We found out that what was already a \$1.1-billion deficit was actually about \$1.9 billion in deficit.

Again, what I would point out is the reality is we came in and took over something that was awful. Does that take away the Member's request to improve this or improve that? Not at all. I would like to see more of everything as well. But I will point out, when he mentioned the 2016 budget –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

A. PARSONS: What's that?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'll just ask everybody to address their comments through the Chair here.

A. PARSONS: I apologize; I thought we were getting into Question Period.

SPEAKER: That's fine.

A. PARSONS: The reality is when you think about the deficit that we've had this year and the things that the minister's been able

to do, the Premier, I think it's quite impressive when you look at what that situation was at that time. So I would say that we have come a long way from that in providing these services.

Now, I'll continue on here, and I just want to point out – and I have to bring this up because this gentleman is someone I've known for a long time. It's not a budget-related issue, but it was brought up yesterday about the head of the PSC.

So I just want to point out, because it was brought up in Question Period, that is certainly an honourable gentleman. When it was brought up, because it was Liberal versus PC, I will point out that that gentleman was first hired in Brian Peckford's administration, 1986 to 1987. So I think that's important to know that when we're going to bring up somebody and bring up something like that, I'd like to be able to know some of the institutional knowledge and the backstory behind this individual.

Now, continuing on, I want to point out two remaining things before I end here. Number one, I'd be remiss if I didn't speak about the department. One of the first Estimates that we had, I know the Member for Lab West was there and the Member for Terra Nova also participated in that. I think actually the Member for Bonavista was there as well. I said then and I'll say it now, that the budget Estimates are the best part of the budget. Instead of people like me standing up and just talking now, and one could question whether there's any value, I don't think anybody from either side would question the value of budget Estimates when they're done correctly, and I'd like to think we had a wide-ranging debate.

We didn't just get caught up in line items and numbers and not getting into general – we had general policy chats. I enjoyed that when I was a Member of the Opposition. We had certain ministers that would engage in that; we had others that wouldn't. When I did this budget Estimates here, I find you get more if you actually have a conversation with people and figure out the reason why you didn't do something.

But we had a great conversation. I think there's a reason actually why you haven't seen many questions evolve from that, is that even despite of challenges that we face in other areas, whether you talk to the investment we've had to make in education and health, we did manage to make a significant investment in our department as well.

Just a few things to point out. Number one, \$90 million in an offshore exploration initiative. We did that program once and I give the credit actually, one of the originators – I can't say she is the originator of the idea but certainly the one who brought it back to us in 2020 was Charlene Johnson, Energy NL.

We were going through a tough time, at that time, in terms of the industry as a whole. That was one of the ideas about promoting and sort of prompting continued investment in our offshore, creating jobs. We did it then, it had value and it had success. We've actually brought it back again starting next year, which is what the industry asked for. Thirty million dollars, in the grand scheme of things, is it going to drill wealth itself? Not at all when you have one well that can cost you between \$120 million to \$150 million, but when they can count that as about 25 per cent of the bottom line, it will incentivize them.

I can absolutely say that since we announced that in the budget, we, in the department, have had conversations with the majors about people now considering exploration because of the move that we have made. I think we'll see success there and it was good move. I think I've recognized the originator of the idea and, again, I thank the minister for being receptive to the idea in the light of all these competing challenges.

Natural gas: We have about a million dollars being invested to do phase two of the natural gas assessment. I can say to my colleagues in the House that while I don't have the results of phase one out, it didn't time with the budget, it will be out, hopefully, this month. What I would say is what I've

seen is it's positive. It is absolutely positive. We all know that we have an abundance of untapped gas in our offshore, has not been utilized the way it should.

There's more of a conversation on it now, especially as we talk about a transition fuel. I guess I'm only teasing it here now but positive news there and something that I look forward to being put out there in the window and again for creating that appetite for a continued investment in our offshore, job creation and energy security at a time when our geopolitical world is more contentious perhaps than it has been in some time.

I would continue on here now. We've had the same money going into critical minerals and mining. I know the Member for Lab West talked about we need to put more into it, and I don't disagree. I would love to find a way but when the question becomes beds in hospitals and exploration, that's the problem. As a government, you have to have those competing battles. I'd like to think that we're still doing what we can to put money out there to invest and to explore.

What I would say to the Member, I mean, Lab West itself is a hot bed. We know there's massive opportunity there, which has only been heightened now with the MOU, but the entirety of Labrador is vast and very much unexplored, under explored. I'd say to the House Leader, actually, who has brought it up a million times when talking about her family would be flying over, how much is there that has not been looked into that we can tap into and it gives me hope for what the finds could be going forward and the returns on those finds for the beneficiaries, which is the people of this province.

Now, I have to point this out, because again I have to bring up the district impact here. One thing I was super proud of – two things, I guess. One, we'll continue on with some roadwork that's been talked about for a couple of years, which is passing lanes coming out of Port aux Basques. If people don't realize the importance, if you've never

gotten on the boat or gotten off the boat, it's the main rubber tire point of entry in the province. When you think about the summers, all those vehicles coming off and it was a single lane basically all the way. Little spots here and there.

It's a much-needed investment that's been a long-time coming and I thank my colleague for continuing to work on that.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

A. PARSONS: What's that?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

A. PARSONS: As long as it's not the Memorial Highway.

Last thing I would say is – and I give credit to the Premier, and I had something on my Facebook about this – we're about to get a CT scanner in Port aux Basques because of the investment made in this budget. That's one that's been a long-time coming.

Everybody here knows about people that have had to travel for health care. Sometimes it's long distance and sometimes it's not. But something as simple as a CT scan for just about any ailment you can talk about, from minor right to the most serious, you need that scan. When you have to travel 260 kilometres, sometimes in the depth of winter, to go in and get that scan and then get back out, it's difficult.

So now to have that piece of technology in our hospital, it's going to save a lot of people a lot of time, a lot of strife. For those people that are ill having to travel, it's going to make their lives easier. So very appreciative of the Premier being one of the ones to bring this up. We've been talking about it for years. It's not a new thing. We've been talking about it for years. The Premier made it happen. I give credit to the ministers of Health that have worked on this file and the staff in Health. So happy to see that one happen.

On that note, I didn't plan on taking a lot of time. I know there are a few minutes left for

somebody else to speak. I just want to say that hopefully we'll see – I know there's a lot in this budget that people may disagree with. But I absolutely think there's a lot in this budget to support. I know that I'll be supporting this budget. I am thankful for the work that's been put into this. I appreciate the debate and I look forward to getting another chance to speak to it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I, too, don't want to take the entirety of my time, but I will speak up and talk about a part of what the Minister of IET there spoke about, minerals and critical minerals in Lab West and the opportunity in Lab West. There is a great opportunity in Labrador West, but also there's a great opportunity that needs to be invested in as well. Once again, like I talked about yesterday and I'll talk about again today, is the investment into the community. Because without the community, there is no powerhouse that is Labrador West.

You know, 71 years of continuous mining – not many places in the entire country get to say that they were mining 71 consecutive years. It's a rarity even in today's modern era, especially with the advancement of mining technology. Deposits deplete a lot faster than they used to but now, we've been doing it for 71 years. We did it for 71 years because we were lucky that we had community behind us, and that community needs to be supported in many different ways.

As the demographics and things change in Lab West, we have more seniors who want to stay behind. Like I said, I have my grandfather, dad, me and now my own kids. My children are the fourth generation in Lab West. That's an entire history, a 71-year history, of a place and right now the demographics are obviously changing.

People don't want to leave. At the time grandfather left, went back and retired around the bay. My parents, they don't want to leave. They've got grandkids there. They want to stay and live in the community as long as they possibly can.

That's what's happening now and that's why we need a better investment into it when it comes to our seniors. Seniors who built that community want to stay in that community. Why build something and then leave? They want to stay and see the success that is community and by that success is their families – their families are staying and working and carrying on the traditions that we built there. So that's why.

Like I said, there are no personal care homes. There is no home care. There is no seniors living. There is nothing there other than what they always had there. Most of them are living in houses that cannot even be accommodated for any assistance: you can't make wider hallways, you can't put stairlifts on the stairs because the stairs are narrow. They were designed for families. Those houses were designed in the 1950s for families. They were not designed for seniors who have mobility issues and that thing.

We're hearing stories of seniors living in their living rooms because they can't get upstairs, or they can't get downstairs to do laundry because, at the time, laundry was put in the basement and you lived upstairs so you've got three stories of stairs to go up. They can't modify that and this is where we're in a moment of error. We have to start accommodating and start to be more receptive to what's going on. So this is why we talk about investment into the community but we want to invest into our community in a way that we can continue to prosper.

I worked in the mining industry; my wife continues to work in the mining industry, my father, my mother, my stepmother, we all worked there in a collaborative way but we don't want to see anything change in the sense that we don't want to see the degrading of our community. We want to

make sure that seniors are accommodated. We just want everything that everyone else had and that's why it's important that we see these investments. That's why, unfortunately, we didn't see the investments that we wanted to see. We didn't see anything for our seniors in Labrador West, just a line item that they'll continue to work on something but there's no real, true investment into the community.

We don't have home care but we didn't see any investment into trying to help bridge the gaps on why we can't get home care workers into the region or bridge the gaps on why we haven't seen any personal care homes in the region. We rely on 12 long-term care beds that are in the hospital but they're full all the time. There's no real ability to get in so more and more seniors are having to move away.

I talked with a family that their mother lived in Lab West since she was a teenager, raised her family there and now she lives alone in a home in Gander because that's the only place they could find that was close enough to some family that she could move to while her grandkids and her family continue to live in Lab West. That's not fair for anybody who spent their life toiling away in a region to build it up to a community that it is, only to have it taken away from you when you realize: I can't stay here anymore because of an ailment. That's unfair.

That's unfair to anybody, especially in a place that is so very special to them. It's very special in the sense that a lot of the traditions that were built around that community, the people are still alive. They're still around, enjoying it and seeing what they created, and now they're slowly watching it get degraded as their friends have to leave because they can no longer live in the community that they once built. They can't live in the way that they all lived.

So this is where I think it's very unfortunate and unfair how things have moved forward but, at the same time, I hope that we can find ways to improve that. That's why I continue to push on this government to do the right thing and to make sure that a place

like Lab West, that continues to prosper on the industry side but not prospering on the social side, gets the full thing.

Like I said yesterday, when we want something or we're trying to find something, we're like ghosts. You see right through us but when it's time to roll out the slide show and show off the prosperity of the province, usually the first slide you'll see in the slide deck is an ore car full of ore and showing how great things are and how much ore is getting shipped out of the province from us, but you have to remember that the people that put that in there are the people that are asking for just the same thing that everybody else in this province enjoys.

That's why we continue to push to make sure that our seniors are taken care of; that people that don't work in the mining industry, don't make those big wages, are still taken care of; to make sure they have an affordable home to live in, somewhere to go to and not staying on somebody's couch or in somebody's garage, because that's what's happening right now; to make sure that if something happens to them or their child or their parent, that they are able to be seen by a health care professional. Right now, you go and take a number up in emergency and hopefully you get seen to within 12 hours because that's where we're to.

There are no family physicians operating in the same capacity anymore, and our collaborative care clinic is not off the ground like it's supposed to be. So right now, we're just in this spiral of people trying to figure out – well, where do I go? I have to go see a doctor. I have to go see my specialist. I need a referral. Unfortunately, there's no clear answer with that right now because there are no health care professionals filling very critical roles in the region because there's nowhere for them to live if they do take the job.

We continue to see where teachers and stuff continue to be – programming is not the same as it used to be because we're trying to fill slots for teachers. We're slowly trying to get that back up but, like I said, it's

trying to move into a region where there is little housing and little health care so people are either not taking the jobs or ignoring the job ad because they know that it's a situation that's going on there that's not being addressed.

We continue to see this and, unfortunately, it is not being addressed in where we want it to be addressed. We see that this is a region that has a million amounts of prosperity ahead of it. We see that we have a possibility of a third mine and we have an expansion of another mine. We continue to see that these are things that can happen, but it can't happen without community. If it does happen without a community, then you're just going to make the situation that's there worse. The last thing we want is our community to end up nothing more than a mining camp, a fly-in, fly-out town. We don't want that. We want to continue to see prosperity and the advancement of Labrador West.

It is an amazing achievement in engineering. It's an amazing achievement in success. It was considered one of the greatest post-war projects. They put a railway up through an area that they thought the railway could never ever be built. They managed to fly in; for the first time, it was the largest airlift of equipment since World War II. They managed to put in infrastructure and stuff into a region that no one ever thought could ever happen, but now, without the proper investment in the community, it's all going to be for nought.

We are a success story and we want to continue to be a success story. This is what the fantastic part about it is but we need government backing. We need government investment. We need government to have our back because without it we're just nothing more than a mining camp. That is not what happened. You just see the amazement – how amazing it is. That's what I said, even in the MOU debate. I said, everyone in this House should go and visit Labrador West. Everyone in this House should go see IOC, go see Tacora, go see Churchill Falls and go see how important that this province is and how important that

IOC, Tacora, CF(L)Co and Canning projects are there.

That's why I need to make sure that we have the investment and that's why I continue and that's why I said I have disappointment in this budget because it doesn't truly advance what we need to do. At the end of the day, I hope that we can actually get there.

So thanks, Speaker, with that I take my seat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Does the Member want to adjourn debate and keep the remaining time?

J. BROWN: Yes, Sir.

SPEAKER: Okay so I just ask for you to –

J. BROWN: I'll adjourn the debate and keep my time for tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

This being 5 o'clock on Wednesday, this House do stand adjourned. We will reconvene on Monday, May 12, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

Before we adjourn, I just want to wish everyone a very Happy Easter and safe travels as you head back to your districts.

Thank you.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, May 12, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.