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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 6 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit visitors.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

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

SPEAKER: Okay, we will now be debating the amendment to the budget.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always an honour to sit in this House and talk about my own riding, the budget and everything else that affects people in this province. It's an interesting time in Newfoundland. Obviously, we're on the eve of an election, coming some time before October, and always all kinds of questions.

I guess one of the first things – I won't talk about my district initially – I just want to talk about industry for a little bit and several things I want to hit on. I guess I'll go back to our sitting in January when we discussed the MOU and I'll highlight a few things. As we sat here over the last couple of days, every now and then during discussions on money, there was always some chirping and, listen, this has gone on since 2019 and long before. There has always been some conversation around Muskrat Falls. We hear it all the time; Muskrat Falls is the blame for everything.

I would be lying, I guess, if I didn't say that that is the fallback for everything that bothers me. What I'll say is, just before Christmas there was an announcement on an MOU for the Churchill Falls deal 76 years after Churchill Falls came into effect. Speaker, 76 years later, this government – the same government that brought us

Churchill Falls – has an opportunity to get it right.

Whether or not it's going to be right or wrong, it's been debated. We have a committee formed to look into it and see how it goes and I don't believe that there's anybody in this House that doesn't want it to be right. I firmly believe that. I think that we all want it to benefit the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, not just the CF1, the CF2 expansion and the possibility of Gull Island expanding power lines going to Labrador West and Goose Bay; hopefully, so more power can be put out there so businesses can grow.

All of these things which, in the previous minister of Industry, Energy and Technology's words and the Premier's words and Jennifer Williams, the CEO for Newfoundland Hydro's, words – as a matter of fact, everyone who sat here, whether it was Jason Chee-Aloy or any of the people who advised on this – I guess advised is a word we can throw out there, but they only advised on certain portions – was how important this was to be done rapidly.

So one of the Members yesterday was yelling out about Muskrat Falls so I'm just going to give, I guess, a little bit of a history lesson. Back in 2009-2010, when Premier Williams put forward the Muskrat Falls deal and, really, left. It went to an election and the province voted on it, really. When they elected Premier Dunderdale, that was her mandate, that's what she ran on and that's what gave them government at that time. We decided to move forward with Muskrat Falls.

At that time, the estimated cost was somewhere just over \$6 billion. When these initial estimates are done, no matter who you are or what you do in life, they are done on an order of magnitude. When you say order of magnitude, when you're talking about an estimate it is plus or minus 25 per cent. If we, for argument sake, say it was

plus 25 per cent, we're somewhere up around \$8 billion.

We all know the overruns that have come here and we've heard the names associated with it, but the reality of it is that this Churchill Falls deal would not exist today, according to this government. This government said it in that debate. The questions were asked; the question was asked specifically to the CEO of Newfoundland Hydro, who was asked across the way, and the minister answered the question. It would not have happened if it were not for Muskrat Falls.

Why? A couple of reasons: one, is the power lines that are in existence right now, and the second is all of the environmental studies, the labour agreements, everything is in place because of Muskrat Falls. Muskrat Falls enabled this Churchill Falls MOU to happen. The Gull Island project comes specifically under those deals. You don't have to take my word for it, you can go back through *Hansard* and you can listen to the previous minister sit here and agree with me when I made that statement. It's clear.

Do we understand how much Muskrat Falls cost? Absolutely, we know there were cost overruns, but here's the problem I have with it. When we come in here and we talk about the cost to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and the future and all the things associated with Muskrat – so the MOU is going to save the province but without Muskrat, we wouldn't have an MOU. Then someone will say: Well, if we didn't have Muskrat Falls we wouldn't need saving. Well, I will say this: If we didn't have Muskrat Falls, we would need to build a new facility such as the one in Holyrood. We all know that that's ready to go by the wayside. We needed excess electricity so Muskrat Falls can't be an excuse.

Then I'll go back to the point that was made here several times. In 2017, the then-minister – it wasn't Industry, Energy and Technology at the time –

AN HON. MEMBER: Natural Resources.

L. PARROTT: Natural Resources at the time, had indicated that the Muskrat Falls project was somewhere around 75 per cent complete, in a discussion with EY and said then that, you know, we were pushing forward and there'd be no overruns – 75 per cent in the first two years and then it took seven more years in order to get the other 25 per cent done. There were obviously issues with construction.

In 2015, this government had the opportunity to walk away from it – and I'm not suggesting that that was the right answer, we could have done whatever we wanted. I will also say, during that same time frame, when Astaldi was messing up and making all of the errors, we had an offer from Kiewit to come in here and take it up on a hard dollar and we turned it down.

The reality is then we went to a Muskrat Falls Inquiry. This is speculative, but I would say right now, if this government was so certain that everything they'd done was correct, they'd have no trouble having another look at how this was done. If the Muskrat Falls Inquiry was done today, I think that we would clearly see that there was a serious issue with management and construction that could have been remedied or rectified between 2017 and 2020, zero question about it.

Instead, we chose to bring in –

AN HON. MEMBER: No. It was under a contract.

L. PARROTT: The minister is over there saying no. I'll give some examples just so we know.

AN HON. MEMBER: It was under contract.

L. PARROTT: We kicked the contractor out of there. Astaldi didn't complete it. We know that. It wasn't under contract.

It wasn't under contract, Minister – and you know this – for us to build power lines in the middle of the winter – in the middle of the winter. There were never any plans to bring in helicopters, ever. It was this government and Newfoundland Hydro who decided to do that. Nalcor, they decided to do that.

We built and commissioned the power line three years prior to it being turned on. That's not false information; that's factual information and we were in a mad rush to do it. Every contractor in Newfoundland that had a flat bed was bringing power lines and towers right across the province up to Labrador at exorbitant costs. How do I know? I had a major contract doing it. I understand exactly how it worked.

What I will say is that there were decisions made that created cost overruns by Nalcor and government that could have been avoided, but none of that matters.

My point is this. I agree that it costs too much money. I've got no problem saying it, but I also know we own it. We've heard time and time again our cost of power is going to double. Our cost of power hasn't doubled. Rate mitigation has helped that, there's no question.

Here's the thing. We're still five or six in the country. That's what we're paying. That's right where we are, right in the middle of the pack. We don't have the most expensive power. We've got clean energy, and we can't speak out of both sides of our mouth. We can't be clean and green and want to go forward with all of these environmental things and then say that project is the worst project ever because it's not – it's not.

The constructability was the issue, and the constructability was managed by the Liberal government and Nalcor. There's zero question about that.

S. CODY: There is a lot of questions about that.

L. PARROTT: There are zero questions about that but in 2017, Minister, you said in an EY article that we're 75 per cent complete, we are going to do it and there are going to be no more cost overruns. You cannot stand on your feet and say that there were no cost overruns between 2017 and 2023.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: You can't do it. That's an EY article that was quoted here and you know that. It can't happen.

AN HON. MEMBER: I don't remember you ever saying anything about no more cost overruns.

L. PARROTT: It's in the EY article.

All of that aside, if we sit here all the time and we want to cast blame and doubt and shadow on the cost of Muskrat Falls and what it has done in this province, we've got to look at the whole picture and the whole picture clearly says that if we didn't have Muskrat Falls, this province would be in trouble.

The ones that want to argue about that, I would say, think of this. We have a large portion of the province up there now in Labrador that are starving for electricity. They still can't get it – they still can't get it. It can't happen. At the end of the day, it was a mistake and the mistake wasn't that we built Muskrat Falls. It was, as a government and as a government-owned entity in Nalcor, we decided to try and build something on our own that we didn't have the capability to do it.

We had engineers that were from the offshore running an electrical hydro project. It made no sense. If you want to talk to the people that worked in that, they'll tell you the same thing. There were so many mistakes – so many mistakes. What wasn't a mistake and this new MOU, if it's as good

as everyone says, clearly proves that it wasn't a mistake.

If we're going to sit in the House and constantly chirp and blame things on Muskrat Falls, we've got to remember how it all came about, what happened from 2015 until 2023 and how we got to where we are and, subsequently, the MOU that's coming in front of the House, again, I will say the MOU that we all hope and wish is perfect. There's no question.

It's kind of funny because every now and then we get a quip across the way where somebody says you voted against, you voted for. We do all of these things. So yesterday, one of the ministers, there was a question brought up about voting, and I quipped across and said you voted for it. He said: No, I didn't vote for it. But he didn't vote for it because he didn't say anything.

If people don't understand how it works in the House of Assembly, so for the people at home that are sitting there, we as MHAs don't have the right to abstain from a vote. So saying nothing means no. It's why we walked out on the MOU vote. We didn't walk out on the MOU vote because we didn't want to vote against it or for it. We walked out because we didn't get what we wanted when it came to the oversight that should be there for a project of this magnitude. It's very simple.

AN HON. MEMBER: I bet you voted against it.

L. PARROTT: And so do you. Thank you.

So the minister just said, so we voted against it. So my point is, as the Minister of Transportation said yesterday, I didn't vote for it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Address the Chair.

L. PARROTT: Listen, I'm only arguing what was said from your side of the House yesterday, so we're all good. Chirp away. Tell us about Indigenous Affairs there, Minister. Go ahead.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: Stand on your feet and tell us everything you know –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Member for Terra Nova, address the Chair please.

Thank you.

L. PARROTT: As a province, we've made lots of mistakes. It happens all the time. We do it historically. Churchill Falls, we can go back through all kinds of history and see the things we've done.

We can look at land sales, mental health, we can look at all kinds of things that have happened on that side and on this side. No matter who's in government, they think that they make the best decisions at that time for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I believe that everyone's here for the right reason. We don't always have the right answers. What we wanted was oversight from outside. That's it.

AN HON. MEMBER: You got it.

L. PARROTT: Yeah, we got it. I've seen the first quarter report. Did you read it? Lots of information in that. My son is in Grade 11, and I guarantee you, he could write a report just as good. I guarantee you that.

The oversight we were told we were going to get was a report in the House of Assembly, first quarter, end of March. It hasn't happened. When I asked the question in the House of Assembly, we were told we could go online and read it. Those are the types of deals that happen

here, so if you want to have that discussion, I'm more than willing to do it.

When we talk about things like the budget and you guys have constantly said, you voted against it or you didn't – when we vote against something, it's not because we vote against something holistically, it's because at the end of the day, there's things in there that we don't agree with, individual things, or it's because things that are omitted that we believe should be in there.

We have presented numerous amendments that have been practical and made sense that have been shot down. We've presented numerous PMRs. Look at sugar tax. All of a sudden, we're getting rid of it. So the Finance Minister spent three years defending it; she wanted it. The new Premier, he was all for it. Now, all of a sudden, it's going away. It's going to disappear. It was the greatest idea ever. But it's no more anymore. But we're not playing politics. There's no politics in this. This is just how it is. We do these things all the time.

It's 2025, guess what's coming? There's an election coming. We know with certainty \$500 million in the budget today that was exposed, and we say it's general accounting. But in 2015, when you guys took power – and I would argue that the government of the day in 2015 probably used the exact same type of math. I would argue that they probably did. I don't know; I wasn't here. But I bet you it was close. All we've heard since 2015 is look at the mess you left us. Well, that mess is the same thing you're trying to make the people of this province believe doesn't exist.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: The exact same mess that you guys are – it's there. It's there now. It's exposed. If it wasn't, then it would have been openly put out there. It would have been in the budget. It would have been a

line item. It would not have to take questions or CBC digging or any of those types of things. It would have been there clearly for everyone to see.

AN HON. MEMBER: Transparency.

L. PARROTT: Well, transparency is the word of the day, hey.

We talk all the time about hiring doctors as an example, nurses. We don't talk about the subtraction. We always talk about the addition. We know, with absolute certainty, that we hired X amount of doctors, but when we ask how many have left, there's never an answer. We've hired X amount of nurses. Well, where are they working to? Well, we can't get that answer because most of them aren't here yet. They're not working. We don't know if they're coming. We don't know if they're going to be certified. I said here not too long ago, I had a doctor in my area who actually spent time on welfare trying to get certified. Think about that. All of the time.

We sit here and we think about assumptions. Today, there's a reasonable assumption that we will get paid. But it's okay to have a reasonable assumption that we're going to get paid, no question. But there's no certainty –

S. COADY: That's not what I said.

L. PARROTT: It is what you said. You can check *Hansard*. Actually, it was just on the news. You said reasonable assumption – exact words.

S. COADY: You should take it in its entirety –

L. PARROTT: It's in *Hansard*. You said reasonable assumption. It's all there.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: I'm talking across the road, and you can –

AN HON. MEMBER: Well, let's talk.

L. PARROTT: I can look at you and talk to you if you want me to.

AN HON. MEMBER: Well, then talk.

L. PARROTT: The minister will have an opportunity to stand up and talk when I'm done if he wants, no question whatsoever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

If Members want to talk across the floor, please take it outside.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, we have lots of issues in the province and, sometimes, those issues exist right here in the House of Assembly. I think we just all have to learn to get along, hey?

I'm not here trying to say that people are wrong about Muskrat Falls. What I'm trying to say is that this House of Assembly is full of a group of people who want the right thing. When we look at that picture, we have to look at all sides in how we get there. There is lots of blame to go around with stuff but if someone's going to stand over there all day long and talk about Muskrat Falls and blame everything that happens here between Muskrat Falls and COVID – well, first it was Muskrat Falls, then it was Snowmageddon, now it's COVID so here we are.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, I see my time is getting short. So I'm going to table a non-confidence subamendment. I, the Member for Terra Nova, move a subamendment, seconded by the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, that the amendment that was –

SPEAKER: The Member has to be present.

L. PARROTT: – seconded by the Member for CBS, that the amendment that was previously presented, the non-confidence motion, be amended by changing the period at the end of “thereof” to a comma, and also by adding immediately thereafter the following words: and that this House also faults the Liberal government for its failure to support residents, communities and businesses located in rural areas of our great province.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

This House will stand in recess while we take time to review the proposed subamendment.

Recess

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'll get away from Muskrat Falls now, and I'd like to talk about some things inside my district and in the province. People in the House have heard me talk multiple times about health care specifically in my own district, but these are issues that run deep throughout the entire province.

I just got off a phone call 20 minutes ago where a doctor in my area said, over the last 10 days, there has been three people redirected from Burin that have passed away – heart patients – because of no internal medicine. I expect that that's correct. The other thing that was said was that somewhere between Burin and Clarendville, because of dropped – there's no

cell service. There's a one-hour void, give or take. There was no communication with the ambulance. We've got people dying because of this.

I've said in the House here, I've had four internal medicine specialists – and in fairness to the Premier, he and I did some work on this together, or tried to. I know that there was an effort, and I know that someone's going to stand up and say we've raised the funding and we've raised our offer and recruitment and retention is our most important thing, and do you know what? I don't doubt that but it's not working. It's not working in rural Newfoundland. It is not working.

If we don't have health care professionals in the hospitals, if we've got radiologists in Grand Falls that aren't there, if we've got internal medicine specialists, OB/GYN – and, listen, not only that, in my district in the hospital in Clarenville, I know with absolute certainty that there's an individual that wants to come out there, an OB/GYN, that has been trying to deal with government and get a job and they cannot get an offer. This is a physician that wants to move to a portion of rural Newfoundland and has had no satisfaction from a recruitment standpoint. Now, we can't stand in this House and talk about how much we're trying to recruit and then have the individuals call us and say, oh no, I'm not hearing from anyone.

Last week, I met with medical students, as I'm sure most of us got calls from medical students that were going out with their week of action and things. The medical students I talked to, I asked them specifically if they had heard from anyone inside of government and their exact answer was: Absolutely, we heard from the Nova Scotia government and the PEI government. I asked them if they heard from Newfoundland and they said no.

That is what we're doing. So we say we're not doing that, and I believe that all of the

previous ministers believe with certainty that the recruitment is happening but these people are not going to go around and lie about this. It's just simply not going to happen. They've got no reason to do that. So when two medical students come into my office and they say that they have not been approached by anyone inside of Newfoundland then we've got big issues. If we can't recruit people at home then how are we going to recruit people from away? It's not going to happen.

We talk about the nurses. In my district, and this is another great example, we went out and we recruited all of these nurses from overseas – and kudos. It's great to have them. We're excited. They're doing a great job, but the nurses that came to Clarenville, we've had several of them leave. So where did they go? They came to St. John's. What happens then? We've got the previous minister stand up and say, oh, we hired these nurses for blah, but we didn't hire them. It's addition by subtraction and we see it everywhere.

I had three internal medicine specialists leave Clarenville. Where did they go? They came to St. John's. We stand up in here and we say rural Newfoundland is being neglected and I don't think it's intentional, I'm not defending government, but it's happening and it's as if they don't believe that it's happening. It's as if this vacuum that we've created with health care is nonexistent. How do we know what we've hired when we don't know what has left?

It's a simple question and it's a question that begs an answer and it begs an answer because of this: Why would we hire if we didn't need them? We wouldn't be filling vacancies if they didn't leave. So we ought to know those numbers, but government can't supply those numbers. They've been asked many, many times. The numbers aren't there. All they answer is recruitment and retention is our main priority and blah-blah. It's the same answer every time. We should know those numbers.

I've got a community care clinic out there. I've got one doctor in it. I don't have the rest of the staff. They announced two years ago that it was open. It wasn't open. They had the facility rented; it wasn't open. It's the same everywhere – and, yes, there are troubles. When I talked to physicians they say the same thing. One of the first questions that was asked to me was, how do you feel about virtual care? I actually echoed what the new Minister of Health said this morning; virtual care is a tool that we need to have in our toolbox. I don't doubt that for a second. When I worked with search and rescue, we utilized virtual care all the time. We need to have it but that shouldn't be a primary source of care.

It should not replace an emergency room. It should not replace the ability to triage a patient. Go to Bonavista, knock on the door and they'll tell you to go on, go home and call an ambulance if you need an ambulance, but we've got nurses in there. We've got paramedics down there. If you're in a car accident, what's the very first thing a paramedic or a firefighter does? They triage you; but we're telling our own nurses, our own paramedics that work for the government that they can't do it.

We're sending patients home and, as a matter of fact, the Member for Bonavista will tell you, I was at a meeting and I listened to this man's daughter talk. We had a man die because he was turned away at the hospital, told to go home and call an ambulance for himself. It's the craziest thing ever and it's not okay. We sit here and pretend that it's okay. It's not okay. We're failing. Do you know what? I get it. We want to succeed. I know that there's efforts out there to succeed but if we don't look at a way to do things different in rural Newfoundland, we're never going to succeed.

When we talk about collaborative care clinics, the answer has always been, this model works everywhere else in Canada. I get it. I don't doubt it. When I talk to doctors,

they say that these collaborative care clinics are the future and they work everywhere else in Canada but, do you know what, everywhere else in Canada is not rural Newfoundland.

If you can't recruit a doctor to Bonavista, how are you going to recruit an OT or physio or a psychologist or an RN or all the things associated with being a part of this team. We can't recruit one simple portion of it, yet we're trying to fool the public into thinking we're going to recruit them all down there.

Then there's the whole idea of Patient Connect. We heard the previous minister a thousand times say, oh, we've rostered these many patients. My patients that have been rostered, they don't have continual care. If they go to collaborative care clinic – without a doctor, by the way. They're on a roster where they can do a walk-in. They go there and they don't have continual care. Their reports aren't going back to anyone. If you're a cancer patient, you're doomed.

I had a lady in my district last week who needed a lumpectomy. A piece of machinery went down that was an easy fix and, instead of it getting fixed, the hospital was turned down for the fix. Now it did get fixed but it was turned down. After we intervened it got fixed. It was turned down. It was Thursday evening. She was told that she had until Friday morning to make a decision to get a double mastectomy done. She was given 12 hours – double mastectomy – but the lumpectomy would not happen.

I don't know about anyone in this room, but I can guarantee you, as an individual who's had an amputation, the last thing anyone wants is something like that, especially when there's other alternatives and she was turned away. Now, fortunately, we intervened, the piece of machinery got fixed and she had her lumpectomy but this is what's happening in rural Newfoundland. I

don't know how we don't get it. We just don't get it.

Ambulances – I tell you what, come to my district and call an ambulance. There was an accident just outside Terra Nova Park. The people that attended the accident scene, the very first question 911 asked – don't take my word for it, call and tell them that you need an ambulance. Do you know the first thing they're going to ask you? What is your postal code?

So tell me what my postal code has to do with an accident in the middle of Terra Nova? My postal code isn't in Terra Nova; it has nothing to do with it. You try and explain to them: I'm ten kilometres east here, next to this sign – oh, a moose just walked by; you'll see the moose. That's the best information you can give; they want a postal code. We have had people wait an hour and 40 minutes. Do you know why, because they went to the wrong location – the wrong location.

Now, I'll say this: It was a Stephen Harper initiative when they closed down JRCC. We all know about that – search and rescue – and the argument this government made, and it was this government that's sitting here right now, was that JRCC was essential because of local knowledge. They needed local knowledge in case a fishing vessel or something went down so the people that were on the other end of the phone knew. They understood and they could make it happen.

So what did we do? We amalgamated our ambulances. I'm not saying that's not needed but I can tell you, right now, people are dying because they're not getting ambulance service, and we think it's okay. It's not okay. It's not okay and we need to find a solution. There has to be a solution.

We can't even manage garbage disposal. We can't manage our own dumps. We've got people now applying for cards – and it's kind of funny because we got these boards

and here's a great example. I am one of the MHAs that straddle different districts. For me, I deal with Central and I deal with Eastern. When I get to Port Blandford everything changes. I've never gotten a call about Central waste – not one. My office gets 25 calls a day about Eastern waste. Why, because I'm not in St. John's.

Eastern waste, Robin Hood Bay, is set up for St. John's collection. People in rural Newfoundland don't get collection. I asked the question today about engageNL and I didn't want to go to Eastern waste because it's an ABC, but here's the great example.

It's an ABC and, when I asked them, they're turning people away from the dumps. I can tell you people are throwing the garbage out and if you don't believe me, come out and I'll show you exactly where they're putting it. We call the minister – I've called the Minister of Environment – and they said there's nothing we can do, they're an ABC. The department, they won't talk to the MHA; they say for the individual to call.

Here's what they said: We put it out online. Go to Petley, go to Hickman's Harbour, go to any of those areas on Random Island, go down Southwest Arm, I've got multiple communities that don't have internet access. How in the name of God are they going to apply for a card or know that they have to if it's not there in front of them? We're doing the same thing as government; engageNL does the exact same thing. We fill out multiple moose licences every year for seniors in our district. Everywhere in Newfoundland is not the Avalon Peninsula.

Rural Newfoundland is suffering and this government doesn't believe it. If they believed it, we'd look at things two different ways. We put different lenses on every single piece of legislation that comes through this House. A different lens for almost everything. Do you know the lens we don't put on it: Labrador and rural Newfoundland. We ought to do that because we need to find a way to manage

things differently in different portions of this province. If we don't, we're never going to succeed. It's been said here before, but somebody got their earmuffs on, and they do not listen.

If I go to the dump tomorrow and I don't have a card, they turn me away. Guess what, and this is the real kicker, do you know why they turn you away? Because you don't have a card and you can't have a card if you don't have a civic address, but they can send you a bill. Now think about that; they can send you a bill but if you don't have a civic address, they're not giving you a card. How much sense does that make? I'm hoping the Environment Minister is listening to this because it's really a big deal.

Now think about this: They send out a bill to every customer they have. As a matter of fact, for a long time they were sending it out to too many customers. They were sending it out to people with cabins – we all know the song and dance – houses that are unoccupied, boarded up and all kinds of stuff, they all got a bill. They even researched to find out who owned that house and if it was a son or a daughter and the parents had died, they received the bills.

Instead of sending the cards out with the bills – the easiest thing, especially for rural Newfoundland – they're not sending anything out and now we've got that issue. We don't manage things very well. I can guarantee you that. I had a conversation today with the Minister of Transportation and I think he gets it, to be honest. I've got a couple of little jobs in my district that need to be done and there was money allotted for it and a little tiny bit more. You don't pave a community if the infrastructure underneath is no good and come in next year and dig it up. That doesn't make sense.

I've got St. Brendan's, as an example, out there. They need a couple of culverts replaced and they are going to go out and do some class A, the contract has been let,

but why would we go out and do that work and then next year go dig it up? It just doesn't make sense. This is continually what we do as a government all the time.

We talk about wastage and how we waste money, it's a great example. We heard just yesterday, or this morning, about a nurse who's working as a travel nurse in the same hospital that she can't get hired in that's got a job ad up. Think about that: we've got a travel nurse working in a hospital where she wants to work, they won't hire her but they'll let her work there as a travel nurse for double the money. It just bewilders me how we do that.

We sit here and we talk about things like we get it all right. It's not that we get it all wrong, we definitely don't get it all wrong, sometimes it pays to listen to the people that are in the communities and on the ground. I can't remember which MHA said it here today, why not engage the local MHA if you're going to do something? Why not? Who knows better? Who knows better what their residents need? I can tell you right now it doesn't even make sense to go ahead and do stuff.

Student jobs, we've got \$70,000 this year. I assume every MHA got close to the same thing, right? So I sent the message to the minister's office and I asked for a readout of the summer jobs from last year. No other reason than I wanted to make sure that I was sharing the pot out equally. I wanted to make sure that people who applied last year and never got it, would have an opportunity this year to grow their business, hire a student and move forward.

Last year, in my district, there was \$141,000 spent on student jobs. Maybe I'm a fortunate one or maybe there's \$70,000 cut. I don't know, because anybody else who sent in and asked the question, they didn't get an answer but that money went somewhere. This year, I'm out there with \$300,000 worth of applications, \$70,000 to fill that and I've got companies and people

screaming. We don't ever say that. Myself and the Member for Ferryland had this conversation so many times since 2019.

In 2019, as individuals in this House, we all got about \$32,500. I might be off by \$300 or \$240 or whatever; I'm not off by much. The next year, after Covid, there was none and then we came back and it went down to \$28,732. It dropped. Guess what else happened in that same time frame? Minimum wage went up. Minimum wage went up and our funding went down, and somebody was here today, they talked about thresholds. It's the same all the time.

We do these things where we make good decisions where we say we're going to fund this, we're going to help do this, we're trying to do something for seniors or for persons with disabilities. We go out of our way as a government, bring in legislation, put money on the table to help people and we end up hurting them because they exceed the threshold. They lose something else. I haven't heard this government once come in here and have a meaningful conversation about thresholds and how we seriously try and help people, because the people that we try and help by raising minimum wage, who access programs because they are below the threshold, are now getting to a point where they are above the threshold.

I've got a young man in my district who is funded for work – now get this. He gets paid just above minimum wage because of the way it works. The person, his support worker, that's with him makes less than he does because of government policy. How are we supposed to get aides to work with people with disabilities if they're not being paid? It bewilders me how we get to that point and it's because we don't put the right lenses on the right things.

If you look at, as an example, the funding that comes out, every MHA gets pretty much the same amount of funding based on where they live. I can tell you right now, in my district I've got 42 communities. I've got

four Lions Clubs. I've got, I think, 11 fire departments. All of these not-for-profits, everything has to be spread out amongst those things.

If you live in – I'll say it – Grand Falls, Gander, Corner Brook, St. John's and any of these large areas, multiple MHAs living in the same area and very few applications, all things aren't equal. Rural Newfoundland is a different world and until this government or the next government starts looking at rural Newfoundland, whether it's health care or road maintenance or anything whatsoever, with a different lens and understands that the way of life and the way of doing business in smaller communities is much different – I'll give you the greatest line I've ever heard and it's the truest thing.

The minister talked today about housing money that's going up to the Coast of Labrador. I can tell you right now, doing work in Labrador doesn't cost the same as it does in Newfoundland. It's not even close and until we understand that, we're never going to fix those types of problems. If you go to Labrador, times it by two and add half again. It's really that way, especially on the coast in the Northern and isolated regions.

Then you go to Labrador West and you look at what happens there – Happy Valley-Goose Bay, same idea. We let all these contractors come in from other provinces and bring their fuel from other provinces and have their licences and insurance from other provinces and we penalize our own people. So if anyone wants to know why I don't support this budget, I don't support this budget because this budget doesn't support all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We've put out busing for people in the metro area and we don't even consider the people in rural Newfoundland. When carbon tax was a big thing, that really affected everyone. We do not understand how it all works.

At the end of the day, if we don't look at the men and women and the families that live in rural Newfoundland and understand that they drive over broken roads 100 kilometres to get to a bank machine, a doctor, or a grocery store; if we don't understand that their costs are probably more than the people who live in the urban areas; if we don't take a serious look at how we do business in those places, we will continue to fail the same way that we're failing right now.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak on this budget which, I would argue and I will argue, does a lot of things for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I'd say about \$10 billion worth of things for (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: That includes busing in urban areas and rural Newfoundland and Labrador. That includes money for health care throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. It includes money for teachers. It includes money for people who are vulnerable. It includes money for industry. It includes money for technology and mines. It includes money for Indigenous initiatives. It includes money for the future for our children. It includes endless things. I guess I have an hour but I'm only going to use about 20 minutes, and I could go on and on just about the budget.

I do want to take some time to talk about a couple of items here this evening that have come up during the course of the debate. I practised law for a long time. I was defence

counsel for most of those years. The good thing about being defence counsel is you get to hear the other arguments first and then you get to follow-up and poke holes in their case. In this, I'm going to take the opportunity to poke some holes in some cases here this evening, Speaker.

First of all, I do want to talk about health care in Newfoundland and Labrador. I've been on the campaign trail for the last three months and speaking to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians from coast to coast to coast. People have asked me: What are your priorities? Health care is always a priority, Speaker. It is always going to be a priority of any government; in particular, this government, the government who initiated Health Accord NL.

We're so fortunate to live in this country where we have free access to health care. A public health care system for everybody regardless of where you're from, who your parents are, what your job is, nobody is treated differently. We have to continue to work at that because that can always slip. We see other provinces, our sister provinces, who do provide private health care opportunities to their citizens. We are not doing that here. We are continuing to focus, through the Health Accord, on public access to health care for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and this government is going to continue doing that, and working very, very hard at it. It does take effort and it does take hard work.

I talk about the Health Accord a lot because it's an important document. It is a blueprint for recreating a health care system and you can't recreate anything overnight, especially something that is 80 years old which is what our health care system here is, in this province. It is a good blueprint. When I was fortunate enough and honoured enough to be Minister of Health and Community Services in this province, I met with other Health ministers throughout the country and they looked at it with jealousy. If only we had done that two or three years ago as

well, we'd be where you are. We'd be two or three years in it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: I can tell you that the Minister of Health from New Brunswick was not shy in telling me he would be stealing ideas from the Health Accord. Again, he isn't stealing them now; they're ideas from us from two or three years ago.

There are still gaps in the health care system. I think any leader or any Member on this side of the House who would stand up and say it's a perfect health care system, they wouldn't be telling the truth. I recognize that there are issues. The Member for Terra Nova raised issues, and he raised issues with me during my tenure as Minister of Health and Community Services. I tried to work very hard on individual cases and we will continue to work very hard on individual cases, but it will take some time. We will work to fill those gaps. We will get to where we need to be to have the best health care system in this country.

I can tell you why I know we will get there. We have a Minister of Health and Community Services who, despite what the Opposition says, will be laser focused, not on the health care, but on health care in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: We apply a rural lens to everything we do as a government and as a cabinet. The first decision that is being made in the health care system now is by a rural Newfoundlander and Labradorian, and not only a rural Newfoundlander and Labradorian but a nurse who has worked in the system and delivered health care with her own two hands 24 hours a day when she was working. She knows the system. I know she's the right person to continue to develop and increase health care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: So to say that – if I had the words here – we don't care about people in this province. I mean, that is just not true. That is just not true. We care and we're here because we care and she is here because she cares.

She has a little boy at home right now. I'm sure she would rather be there but she is here doing her service to the province and to the health care system. I want to thank her for committing her time and her efforts to us in this House and to every Newfoundlander and Labradorian that will feel her efforts in the health care system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: I want to go back and talk about another issue that was raised here tonight, which was Muskrat Falls.

We've been talking about Muskrat Falls since I've been here for four years. I understand it's a thorn in the Opposition's side because we do tend to raise it when issues come up, like where is the money coming from. We would have more money if we didn't have to use it to mitigate rates; that is a fact. That is a fact.

But to say that it was a good idea and it was only a bad project because of what happened post-2015, again, is inaccurate and not true. I have evidence to show that it is inaccurate and it is not true, Speaker. I will read some of that evidence out now for the record.

This is from the Muskrat Falls Inquiry and the report from Justice LeBlanc. I'm not going to read out everything but I have picked a few important points to back up what I am arguing here tonight: "In proceeding with the Project, the actions of GNL, in effect, showed that it had predetermined that the Project would proceed, notwithstanding it had publicly professed that a business case for the Project would have to be established." So

what they did was: We are going to this and prove our case later.

Now they're talking about moving numbers around. If you want to talk about moving numbers around, they made the decision before they had the numbers, Speaker. So then they had to backtrack and make the numbers up to justify their case, and they did that. They projected oil over 50 years. Speaker, 50 years of oil, you can't turn on CNN and they're saying you can't project week to week.

They projected oil prices for 50 years at \$130 a barrel. Has oil hit \$130 a barrel since 2010 once? No, no, not once. When they did that, the government of the day "failed in its duty to ensure that the best interests of the province's residents were safeguarded." And they are saying that we don't care about the residents of the province now? The decision was made and a conclusion was made that they did not look after the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is a fact, Speaker.

"GNL failed in its responsibility to objectively assess and oversee the decisions and actions of Nalcor. For example, GNL failed to ensure that all viable options for the production of electricity for residents on the Island of Newfoundland were appropriately considered and assessed prior to its decision to proceed with the Interconnected Island Option." Again, they looked at two options, (a) or (b), and there were many, many more options than just (a) or (b) but they had to build the case to fit the decision that they had already made.

"The frustrations felt by politicians and others in Newfoundland and Labrador relating to Hydro-Québec, particularly as a result of the 1969 Upper Churchill Contract, were leveraged for the purpose of promoting the Project." They played politics, Speaker. That's what that said, they played politics.

AN HON. MEMBER: Sounds like the MOU.

J. HOGAN: Yeah, you know, it's the complete opposite of the MOU, and do you know why? Because they leveraged Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians' frustration with 1969 to do a deal that was a bad deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: This government said, how about we try to be friends with Hydro-Québec? How about we stop playing politics? How about we stop playing politics to get a deal for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that's a good deal rather than playing politics to get any deal so they could get re-elected, Speaker? You tell me which is the better option.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: "Before project sanction, it would have been very easy for Nalcor and GNL to have educated themselves on the history of cost overruns and schedule delays for megaprojects...." All they had to do was read a book, Speaker.

Professor Flyvbjerg testified at the Inquiry. I think he was one of the first to testify that said, you don't have to look very far to realize megaprojects go over budget. Again, you want to talk about moving numbers around, if they had just read a book they would have known it wasn't \$6 billion. They would have known it wasn't \$7 billion or \$8 billion or \$9 billion, but the problem was once it went over \$6 billion or \$7 billion, their business case failed because their one other option would have been the better option.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Members on both sides of the House to keep it down.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: So they're talking about 2017, what would they say in 2017? I can tell you what they would have said in 2013.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: I can tell you what the decision should have been in 2013. He can talk about 2015 and 2017 all he wants, but the problem was –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask all Members –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

That's enough, please.

The Premier.

J. HOGAN: You can't go back in time, he's right, but you can make the right decisions if you bother to get the right information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: How do you make sure you've got the right information? I don't know, maybe open up the House of Assembly, the people's House, and give the 40 elected individuals an opportunity to question experts on the deal. How about that as an opportunity?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: How about not locking in the ratepayers of this province to a deal when we didn't even know what the cost was going to be rather than send it to the PUB to assess it as a normal electricity project should be done. How about that for doing what's right, Speaker?

So you want to talk about 2017 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

If Members don't stop shouting across the floor, they're going to lose speaking privileges.

The hon. the Premier.

J. HOGAN: Again, he wants to talk about 2017 but, again I'll go to what should have been decided in 2013 with the relevant information if anybody wanted to read it at the time.

Again, the government of the day "failed in its obligations to the citizens of the province" – failed in its obligation to the citizens of the province – "to provide appropriate oversight of Nalcor at all stages of the Project up to the change in government in 2016."

"Considering the extent of construction completed and the contractual and other obligations in place at the time, the Project had clearly reached the point of no return when the Ball government was elected (late 2015). The real point of no return was at Financial Close of the FLG in November 2013."

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: So you can say what you want about 2016, you can say what you want about 2017, you can say what you want about 1969, you can say what you want about the MOU, the decision was made in 2013 which set Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians back \$500 million a year and that's a fact.

I'm not making this up. I can have people chirp at me and their facts that they think might be true, but we all know you're only entitled to opinions; you're not entitled to your own facts, Speaker. So I think I touched a nerve because there's a lot of chirping this evening to be honest with you. I just wanted to come down and read a document that's public record, that unfortunately cost the taxpayers \$23 million I think.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Premier.

J. HOGAN: But it is a document well worth having, Speaker, because the right thing to do is to learn from our past mistakes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

That's enough. I ask all Members to show respect to the Chair and respect to each other.

The hon. the Premier. You have 45 minutes left.

J. HOGAN: The right thing to do is to learn from our past mistakes, and we've learned from these mistakes that were made. We use the mistakes and this report as a guide to doing the MOU with Hydro-Québec, and we will not make the same mistakes that were made in the past.

We won't be derelict in our duty to the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, Speaker. We all take this job on this side of the House very, very seriously. We care about each Newfoundlander and Labradorian. Whether it's the MOU with Hydro-Québec, whether it's teachers,

whether it's support staff in the classrooms, whether it's health care, whether it's industry, we will have the backs of every Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

We will stick to the facts and, Speaker, we will get things right.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We're talking about facts here this evening and I want to talk about a couple facts myself, especially having the Premier here. This Premier is very familiar with what I'm about to talk about, and that's the Lionel Kelland Hospice in Grand Falls-Windsor. I usually don't write things down to read but I have to read this because I don't want to miss something. I'm going to read verbatim what I've written here and then I'm going to talk a little bit about it.

Lionel Kelland Hospice is the first and only community residential hospice in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador providing care, dignity and respect to people with severe life-limiting illness, as well as their families, and does so in a comfortable home-like environment. It is the product of 10 years of work by a dedicated board and the people of the community of Central Newfoundland and Labrador to address a significant gap in the end-of-life care. While this represents a new initiative approach to end-of-life care in this province, it has been a standard of care in other provinces across Canada. Newfoundland and Labrador will long be remembered as the last one to build it.

Had the people of Central Newfoundland relied on the Department of Health and Community Services and not organized,

advocated and fundraised for themselves, Lionel Kelland Hospice would not exist. The neglect by the department continues today. The operating budget is demonstrably inadequate, issues around medication coverage continue and there is no model in place to pay physicians for services in spite of repeated discussions with reassurances from the department – think about that.

The former premier came out, the photo op happened over a year ago, all the words were said, big discussion, it was a big do, it was fantastic and still no model to pay the physicians that have been working there for over a year. In spite of all government obstacles, since admitting their first resident on April 4, 2024, Lionel Kelland Hospice has provided care for 144 residents and their families in the most challenging of times. On average, a family is cared for by hard-working, compassionate professionals at Lionel Kelland Hospice for two weeks, allowing them the time and space to process the realities of death and dying.

People from every community in Central have been cared for by this facility, as well as individuals from Eastern and Western Zones. Newfoundlanders have been repatriated from other provinces so they may be palliated at Lionel Kelland Hospice surrounded by family and buried in Newfoundland soil. The residents have also included non-cancer patients, a group frequently underrepresented in palliative care with 40 per cent of those cared for having other life-limiting illnesses. For those who measure such things this is a significant accomplishment.

The impact of the Lionel Kelland Hospice is significant on the health care system as well. It has provided 1,898 resident bed days of care; almost 2,000 days of palliative patients were not in hospital beds so patients that really need those beds can have them. How might hospital overcapacity, ambulance off-load delays, loved ones admitted to hallway stretchers and the lack of isolation rooms been

negatively impacted for the people of Central Newfoundland had it not been for the vision and tenacity to create the Lionel Kelland Hospice.

When the time comes, I will be voting with my constituents on this budget and that will be a resounding no. The reason for it is this: The Premier, the Department of Health and Community Services, I assume the Finance Minister, everybody knew that Lionel Kelland Hospice needed \$250,000 of bridge funding this year because they couldn't operate without it. One of the most successful projects in this province when it comes to health care, in spite of it not being underneath Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services. It's so successful because it is not managed under Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services. That's not to say that they're bad, because they're doing their job, but they're swamped. They're overworked. The managers are under so much pressure.

This has been a side of desk issue forever, palliative care – a side of desk issue forever. What the people in Grand Falls-Windsor have done is brought it to the centre of the desk. Finally, we have the first community hospice and it's in Grand Falls-Windsor and we want it to continue to be successful. This is so successful, we have 10 beds and they are constantly being filled with love, caring, compassion and dignity that was not there before. So now what do we face?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: This is what we face: This year, there was a \$250,000 downfall. Where could I find that in the budget? They knew this in January. In January, we knew that that bridge funding had to come. That was three, four months ago. Why was it not in this budget? Why was that gap not closed inside this budget? They knew how important it was to my people in Grand Falls-Windsor, they know how important it is to Newfoundland and Labrador, but it

seems like they're trying to push it to the side of the desk again.

It's not going to the side of the desk again. I can promise you that. Lionel Kelland Hospice is something we are so very proud of throughout the whole province and, the work it has done, it's life changing. What it does for the families that have lost loved ones and the continuous care for them and how they deal with death, it's phenomenal.

The Premier came out and he's seen it. He knows what it's all about. I was so happy that he came out. The new Health Minister: Ma'am, I hope that you come out as well. The invitation is there. I would love for you to come through this thing because it's absolutely phenomenal.

In Estimates, I asked about the \$250,000 downfall again this year, and now we have the Lionel Kelland Hospice, the people that run it, the board that runs it, the people that take care of this, they're under constant worry. Where is this money going to come from? Is this hospice going to close? Is it not going to be as successful as we want it to be? I asked in Estimates, where was this downfall? The answer in Estimates was, we're negotiating.

What's the negotiation for? Are we going from 10 beds to eight beds? Are you going to tell families again, throughout Central Newfoundland that we don't have a bed in Lionel Kelland Hospice for you because we negotiated it down to seven beds but the hallway in Central health is open for you again? It's not acceptable.

You know, I think – for the past 10 months, I worked with the current Premier when he was Health minister and his department. I thought we were doing great work, I really, really did. I thought we were doing great work but, unfortunately, now the people of Central are wondering where this money's going to come from.

By the way, in what universe does a community come together after a five- and six-year vision, establish a centre, have it done – the government didn't have to pay for a building, it was given to them. Then they raised over a million dollars through just private donations, people giving five dollars here, doughnut sales. You see kids selling lemonade for the Lionel Kelland Hospice in Grand Falls-Windsor. In what universe does this happen? But, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, when the doctors told them what model of pay they wanted – of course, we know there is no model yet, so somebody should ask how the physicians are getting paid. Are they?

So you've got to ask yourself, after all this time, we want the model that was paid. The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association made the recommendation which model these positions should be paid under and the response back from Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services was this: Well, that place doesn't fall under Newfoundland and Labrador Health Service, so we can't do that.

No, it doesn't fall under Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services. That's why it's so successful. Again, it's not a knock on the people that work in Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, but they are drowning as well. They are so down on themselves. It's just too much work. It's just piled on top.

What John Campbell, Ken Dicks and Jeff Cole have done is they've taken that off the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services desk. They have taken it away from them so they can focus on patient care mainly. It should be a thank you. It should be, what can we do for you next? How do we continue this success? The only person I've heard yet to say whatever that gets, it needs is the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, and he said it without any hesitation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Not only has he said it to me, but he made sure that he said it to the board in Grand Falls-Windsor as well. Whatever you need, we will provide to make sure that hospice care continues right here in Grand Falls-Windsor, and I thank you for that, Sir. We will hold ourselves to that commitment.

The doctors in Grand Falls-Windsor – we talked about retention earlier when it comes to our services, and we talk about how to keep doctors. We have young, home-grown doctors in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's not to say anything against people that come in to work here because we're very appreciative of them as well. But we have young doctors from Newfoundland and Labrador that want to stay here. I'm talking young doctors. These doctors are still in their late 20s and 30s.

These are the doctors that want to work at Lionel Kelland Hospice. That hospice, right there, is not just a palliative care unit; it's an anchor to bring new physicians in. Because, believe it or not, physicians like to work in different sectors. I've seen physicians come from the ER after a week and I've seen them come, same physicians, from the Lionel Kelland Hospice after a week. It's two completely different people.

Because when they're swamped down in the ER and they're ready to pull their hair out and they're just trying to do the best they can for their community, it's overwhelming for them. It's very overwhelming. When they come from the Lionel Kelland Hospice, it's absolutely humbling. You can tell that their spirit is reborn again and you can tell that a lot of it has come off their shoulders and they were only too happy to do it.

These young doctors want to work under this pay model that Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services apparently don't want to do, and it would keep them there. It would keep them right here in

Newfoundland and Labrador because they're so frustrated. too. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to go that way. As after almost a year and a half since the former Premier was there and had his inspiring words and had the pictures taken, we're still no closer to a model to pay the physicians. It's absolutely unreal.

We just talked about how much of a downfall it is. We said it before and I'll say it again, until the day that this career ends for me, that Premier's office in Grand Falls-Windsor was a mistake from the start. It truly was. Because right now what we're looking at is this, we have choices to make. We have a Premier's office in Grand Falls-Windsor that costs about \$250,000 a year. We have a Lionel Kelland Hospice that could fold if they don't get \$250,000 a year. To the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, folks, which decision would you make? Are we going to keep the Premier's office in Grand Falls-Windsor or are we going to keep the Lionel Kelland Hospice in Grand Falls-Windsor?

You think to yourself, which decision would you make? It seems pretty reasonable to me, Lionel Kelland Hospice. Honestly, I've had some great conversations with the new elected Premier over the past 10 months and I believe that he has tried to help me on this, but I would honestly ask the Premier, if you honestly think that the people in Grand Falls-Windsor do not have a good representative, keep the office open. I know in your heart of hearts, Sir, you know that I can represent that place, and I've obviously worked very well with government because we just worked for 10 months –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: My advice to you today, immediately close the Premier's office. I can work with any minister over there. I truly can. I have respect for every minister there. I look forward to meeting with them. I look forward to working with them. I've worked with every one of them in the past and

we've done some great work together, but to have an office open there it's just disrespectful to the people out there now that we're facing a \$250,000 downfall for the Lionel Kelland Hospice. It makes no sense. It absolutely makes no sense.

Remember, this is taxpayers' dollars. So I'm going to ask the Premier, please, Sir, close that office out there. If at any time you need anything in Grand Falls-Windsor, Badger, Buchans, Millertown, you have my number, Sir, and you can call me any time. Any minister over there can call me any time whatsoever.

I guarantee you and I told you before, I ain't the smartest guy in the room and that's fine, but I'll never ever be outworked and you'll never have the passion that I have for my district, not in a million years. I've never been outworked in a job I've had in 48 years and the passion that I have will carry over. I would love to work with any minister over there, but that Premier's office that's open by appointment only and costing the taxpayers the same amount it would cost to keep our Lionel Kelland Hospice open, it's just mindboggling to many, many people, it's sad and it's discouraging and it's shameful. It is.

We look at the radiology services we talked about today. You want to get more people out there, show them that you care. Show them that you care at the Lionel Kelland Hospice. Give them the payment model that they want. They will work for it. They will build that thing up and next thing you know, we have two hospices in Newfoundland and Labrador. Next thing you know we have three.

If you've never visited the Lionel Kelland Hospice, any Member on the other side, if you're coming through Grand Falls-Windsor, give me a shout and I'll take you over, immediately. I don't even need any notice. I'll take you over there immediately. It's the greatest thing you'd ever want to see. It's absolutely heartbreaking to know that those

people are now sat in Lionel Kelland Hospice, the board members, the people who work there, they don't know where that money is going to come from.

Years ago, lab services was another thing that was going to go. The cancer clinic, we almost lost that a year and a half ago because of government's lack of interest. The physicians in the cancer clinic reached out to the government years ago. For years they've been reaching out and telling them what they need – ignored. Our cancer clinic almost closed. That would be devastating.

The divided highway, after four or five years, I finally get a little bit of help this year. Just imagine how much we're ignoring rural Newfoundland, Central Newfoundland, Grand Falls-Windsor, all this area and all we want is the attention that it deserves. Yeah, it's a \$10-billion budget that you guys are (inaudible), but it's not your money, it's taxpayers' money and its hard-earned taxpayers' money.

Listen, I get it. I know for a fact – and this is not politics, but I'm going to help you out. There's a reason why you're having a problem finding candidates in Grand Falls-Windsor and you can say all you want, oh no, we're not. Listen, I've been approached by 15 people that have come to me and said they've been asked and they said absolutely not. The reason why they can't – and some of them are Liberals, some of them are hardcore Liberals.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: Yes, the Premier.

The reason why they won't because they see. They can't go to a door and knock on that door and represent this agenda that they've been ignored for so long. Is that what they're going to do, they're going to go to a door and knock on it and say, well, how do you feel about the Lionel Kelland Hospice, the divided highway? There are so many things that we've been ignored over,

that I've tried to work with government-wise. I do, and I'll continue to do it.

Like I said, we're talking about this now but I'm going to hand it to the Premier. Whenever I needed him over the past 10 months, we had a meeting, him and his Deputy Minister John McGrath. We had those meetings every single time and it was great. It was, but now we want to see where that juice is from that orange. I want to see what we squeezed out of it. I do.

But for these people to be sat there now and think about where this money is going to come from, it shouldn't be. I mean, \$250,000, it's not a lot of money in the big scheme of things. If we're going to keep that Premier's office open – and it's your office now, Sir – if you're gonna keep that office open, still have these people wondering where they're gonna get \$250,000, that's not fair and that's a sin.

I have the greatest faith that we're going to find the money. I do. I really, really do. But we're talking about finding synergies and stuff like that with Central Health. Let it go. Keep it away from Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services. Let it run the way it's running. Don't interfere with it. Don't stick your fingers in it. Just let it be. It's so successful on its own. It's amazing how successful it is. Ask them where the dotted line is, sign on it and, please, give these physicians, give this community hospice exactly what it needs.

Listen, I've said many times before, you know, I'd honestly die for the people I represent. I love them all. They're like a family to me, and I just want to make sure that they get the best thing going forward. This is the hill right here. Lionel Kelland Hospice is the hill that I'll die on for two reasons: (a), I know how important it is to my community, I know how important it is to my family, I know how it is important to all of Newfoundland and Labrador and I know how important it is to the Premier. Keep this up, please.

I will die on this hill. That's the first reason. The second reason I would die on this hill is because we finally got a place where you can die with comfort and dignity.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: I say to the Member, that's what passion is all about and why we're here in this House of Assembly, the passion for the people on the other end.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: A good speech, very passionate, very personal, the way it should be.

I'm just going to stand because I heard some of the words that the Premier had to say earlier. Sitting over here and listening and he almost said what we all did was wrong with Muskrat Falls. I just want to let the Premier know that this is one person who stood up for Muskrat Falls. So when you stand up and speak about the people over there with the Muskrat Falls, I'm one of the ones who went for five days, night and day, about Muskrat Falls. I know the situation.

I just want to say something. We see the debate today about this \$500 million. History is a great thing. In 2016 – and there are a few over there, I think, that can remember this – when we took over government, there was no doubt that there was information that when we got in about the budget, about the deficit, when you got in to seeing the actually financial situation, it was wrong – it was wrong. No doubt, it was worse than we thought.

But I don't think there's one Member on this side who was in that PC government at the time. I don't think there's one Member sitting

here right now that was involved with Muskrat Falls. I was here.

So if you want to keep on beating on somebody that wasn't here, who had no decision, wasn't involved with it because you want to justify something today, but I can tell you 2016, when we seen that part of the financial statement, we said that was wrong. That information wasn't right. I honestly feel that the money from the tobacco settlement that was put into the budget saying that here's what we got, was wrong. No one can tell me that's right. Absolutely nobody.

The minister today brought up – she's over shaking her head – about the transfer payments we got in, I think, 2019. There are two or three big conditions. One is, it was the federal government. Our federal government who made the commitment to this province, you could take it to the bank. But the other thing you've got to realize, the \$500 million haven't even settled in court yet. It's not even settled in court.

It's taken over 20 or 30 years; it's not taken over three or four years. So this idea, it's all right to admit if you made a mistake. But we've seen that, and we said it was wrong. We called it out then – I called it out then and I'm calling this out also.

The Member for Mount Pearl -Southlands asked the question – in the budget, it says that next year we're going to have a balanced budget. We've got \$500 million – \$400 million, actually, by the time you take out the legal fees and other things, but it's in there \$500 million – where are you going to find that shortfall for next year? Where's it going to go? How are you going to find it?

So the idea this year was the \$300 million shortfall in a deficit, but next year we're going to have a balanced budget. But we didn't count that \$500 million that's in that budget that we won't see next year.

P. LANE: It is \$872 million.

E. JOYCE: It is \$872 million.

I'm a bit like the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans. There's stuff that, really, I just can't give up, and it's the hospital in Corner Brook.

I heard the Premier say – and it was referring to the PCs. Of course we had our disagreements, I'll be the first one to say it, and people know. They've had disagreements with some of the things that I'm after saying and doing also, but when I hear the words "derelict of duties" to a bunch of Members that weren't even here in the debate, weren't even in the debate for Muskrat Falls – I was here; you weren't here – and all of a sudden saying you're in derelict of duties because the party, years ago, that you were a part of, maybe, but not sitting here making decisions, saying you are derelict of duty.

Let me tell you a bit more local, a bit more in time with derelict of duty. The hospital in Corner Brook – you want to talk about derelict of duty. When I left the party in 2018, take a guess what was taken out. The PET scanner, gone, taken out. Take a guess what else was taken out: the laundry services. It's still in the old Western Hospital; taken out, gone.

I wrote the minister at the time – and I still have the letter. I can produce the letter. I said: Who made the decision? But this is the factual part when you try to turn around and say that someone was derelict of duty. I said: Who made that decision that the laundry services were taken out? He said: The two ministers from the area. I wrote back. I said: I wasn't even in Cabinet when it was done, when you made the decision at the time. He wrote back: Oh, in discussions with other people.

So the PET scanner was taken out in 2019. The laundry services were taken out. It was downsized, the hospital, and there's one thing that was supposed to be was to make sure there were rooms for the senior

citizens that were long-term care patients in the acute-care beds and it was never done.

For two years before that hospital opened, I preached to this government, you're going to have a problem but no, what do you do? You go up and you get your picture taken. Go up and hand over the key and it was 75 per cent done. Oh, what a great photo-op.

P. LANE: Where you there?

E. JOYCE: Oh, I went in there. I wasn't invited, but I went there. I wasn't invited. I tell you there are some things I don't need to have an invite to, and that was fine.

So then when they came up and had the opening of the hospital, the same thing and I said, you're going to have a problem. You're going to have an issue. Please take care of it. Nothing done.

On a weekend, they took all the patients, put them over, then they realized they had 62 patients, long-term care in acute-care beds and that's where the problem started. You want to talk about derelict of duty, and everybody knew about it. I know personally about it. From family, I know about it.

Then we turn around and when we're talking about the hospital, I've been six, seven, eight months bringing it up in this House of Assembly, asking questions in this House of Assembly to try to say we got a problem. Finally – finally – there was an announcement made that we're going to put 45 beds over in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital. Guess what? No one could even find out when it was supposed to be done. Taking six months, seven months to do that up, the beds for long-term care patients.

I can tell you if anybody here – and I challenge anybody. I will challenge anybody. I offered the former premier and this Premier, who was the minister of Health, come up to the emergency department with me some night. Come up.

You'll see 25 or 30 people out in stretchers in the hallways and no one will believe me. Come up and see the people taking their loved one home because it's safer to be home than sitting in a hallway with everybody walking by when you've got to use the washroom. Come up when you've got an 82-year-old lady there for 27 hours in emergency because they can't put them up to a bed because there is none.

You want to talk about derelict of duty. Look over here and say there's a derelict of duty over here, as if somehow that I'm part of derelict of duty because I'm raising the issues of the health care. I'm not going to stand for that. I refuse to let the issue drop of the radiation, PET scanner, the old hospital, the new hospital and the emergency department. It's the number one issue in Western Newfoundland, bar none.

So I say to the Premier, you were minister of Health. You're one of the ones that I was saying we've got a problem. You're one of the ones that I've been saying we've got to do something here. So I say to all the Members opposite, any time you want to stand up and go back in the past, I'll give you more recent history. I'll give you a more recent history because I can tell you I know people that are in the emergency department. I know people who had to take their loved ones home. I know 85- to 86-year-old people who's up there 27, 28 hours and couldn't sleep on the floor no more. I know them. I know them personally.

When the government wants to stand up and talk about all this other things that's happening – and I really feel, by the way, that the biggest problem is that we don't want to look at it and say we got a problem. We got 45 beds that's going to open up. We said three or four months ago that they're supposed to be opening up in six months. No one can get an answer.

I'm being asked on a regular basis when is it going to be opened up. I asked the questions in the House. We're working on it

– we’re working on it. They are opening up a hospital that’s already opened – the hospital is still being used a lot. This idea that the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital is closed is just not true. Factually incorrect. If anybody wanted to know – which they do know. The government do know that it is opened, there are a lot of services being offered, a lot of business is still carried on in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital.

Now for some reason, after about a year, year and a half, trying to plead with this government to say that you’ve got a problem here, it’s not right, there are people suffering, and finally say we’re going to do something with 45 beds, what happens then? What happens? We don’t know. Can’t get an answer, and it’s just wrong.

Then I see the PET scanner in St. John’s opened up. Great, it’s going to help more people. I’m glad, but there are people on the West Coast. This PET scanner was taken out by this government. I can show you the letter that the former premier, from 2016, 2018 and 2019 wrote Gerald and the hospital committee saying the PET scanner is involved. It was taken out.

It was this government that took out the PET scanner for Western Newfoundland. Then, all of a sudden, we’re going to put \$2 million into the hospital foundation on when they think it’s fit, when it’s fair to see that we want one done, that we’ll give them the money, sitting in a trust fund. Then finally, after a bit of public debate and a bit of big issue, the government walked in and said, okay, here’s the money for a PET scanner. It’s about four years behind. It’s four years behind.

If we went out and bought one today and got one put in today, it’s two, 2½ years to get it certified, to get the accreditation for it. So we’re four to five years behind. So you want to talk derelict of duty and talk to people over here and I’m over here and say derelict of duty, when I’m up there with the

radiation unit up there, four years ago, five years ago I’ve been writing saying, are you going ahead? Are you going to go ahead and look for radiation oncologist?

I said it the other day and I’ll say it again, there’s a friend of mine that works here in the cancer clinic. He asked the Department of Health can I get leave to go out and start setting up the cancer clinic in Corner Brook? He was denied – he was denied.

I kept trying to get the Department of Health to give him permission to go set up. He was denied. So finally, after they put the radiation in, the unit in itself, I called him. He said: Ed, my kids are in high school; we can’t move now. They don’t want to move. We lost a great opportunity on the West Coast, a great opportunity.

For the Premier of the province to stand up and say that it’s a derelict of duty, as me, I’m over on this side and say it’s a derelict of duty, I’m not going to stand for that. Because I’m going to stand for the person who can’t get a bed. I’m going to stand for the person who have to go home because they can’t stay in the emergency department anymore. I’m going to stand up for the long-term care patient who is not getting proper care. That’s who I’m going to stand up for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: When the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – I’m with you. If I lose the election, and if I’ve got to keep on harping and bringing up this issue because government refused for years to deal with it, and if I lose the election, do you know what? I’m gonna kiss those walls and say I did my best. I’m gonna kiss the walls and say I did my best.

P. LANE: You’re not going to lose an election.

E. JOYCE: I don’t know if I’m going to lose or not, but I’ll tell you one thing, I will be able

to look at every person in the Humber - Bay of Islands, look in their eyes and say I did my best – I did my best. I've raised issues every possibility I can get. I had to fight – fight – and there are people in this House here can remember me when I was over there, I had to fight to get cataract surgery. Had to fight to get it for Western Newfoundland. Had to go against my own government at the time, inside the halls.

If you knew how many times I had to speak up when I was with government to try to get this done and correct the false information all along the line. Then when I'm here as an independent, I refused to give up the fight. Guess what? The cataract surgeries in Western Newfoundland is gone down from a year, year and a half wait-list to 30 days.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: And some over here want to look at me and say derelict of duty? The same model that was approved in Western Newfoundland is now in New Brunswick. Got a letter and they wanted to know the model that they use out in APEX Centre. They're using it in New Brunswick. Do you know what they said? Here's what the government said to the people that's up there. They said: You can do as many eye surgeries as you like. As many as you can, you can do them. We want them out of the hospital.

But here, it took almost three years. And what happened in those three years? How many seniors do we know, that I know, lost their driver's licence; couldn't go to bingo; couldn't go to church; been sitting in their house by themselves, all in isolation because they couldn't get out? Yet, I'm derelict of duty over here? It's just wrong.

I can honestly say I never – and I've been trying to deal with government. Sometimes it does work, sometimes it does, I have to say. I've been trying to explain it, give them options of how we can solve this problem, but it's just like pulling teeth. Because, for

some reason, they can't admit there's a problem, can't admit that we did something wrong and refuse to take it from an independent how we can get it done. What happens in between all this hot air and all this fighting in between? People are suffering. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, people are suffering. That's exactly what happened over the years.

I see my time is getting short. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, right now, I will not stop fighting for the people of the Humber - Bay of Islands, plus the St. George's - Humber too because a lot of them are calling me also, and from Corner Brook, people from Corner Brook. We get 15 or 20 knocking on our doors every week, and the Member for St. George's - Humber knows it because a lot of the people from his district were sending him emails and copying me. He's well aware of the issues out there – well aware of the issues. You know it and I know it.

This is what I say to the Member for St. George's - Humber: We should be working together to get this done. We should be working together.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: This is not me and you. Me and you can have our different views, different debates outside the House, but when it comes to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I don't care who gets the credit, and I'm sure you don't care who gets the credit. We need to get it done. The radiation unit and the PET scanner, we need to get it done. We need to get the 45 beds in the old Western Memorial because some of the people from your area are in the acute-care beds, and some people from my area are in the acute-care beds too.

So what you should do, as a minister now – you're a minister of the Crown; you're sitting in the Cabinet. What you should do is say, how can we find a way to move this forward? And I would help you behind the

scenes. I don't need to be out front. I don't care if I get in the media. I don't care if I get any credit. My credit will be when someone can walk into emergency and needs an acute-care bed, and the bed is there. That's all I need.

This is not being negative toward you. I'm just saying we should work together because you know the concerns because you're getting the same calls. I'm getting the same calls. We should find a way, (a) speed up those 45 beds in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital because no one's getting an update. I asked a question here a while back; all you hear is we're working on it shortly. Can't get an answer.

P. LANE: Stay tuned.

E. JOYCE: Stay tuned. Can't get an answer.

The PET scanner, we don't even know where that's at now. The radiation unit – are we getting a radiation oncologist? No one knows. With a lack of information, people start thinking their own ideas, and they start expressing their ideas and start getting negative. Every time you get someone from St. John's, has to come in here for a 15- or 20-minute scan, it gets worse. People get upset. It causes concern. When they have to come here for radiation, when they're in here for radiation for six, seven months, then people are suffering and can't have that treatment home.

I say to the Member for St. George's - Humber, you're in the Cabinet, and the Member for Corner Brook is in the Cabinet, it's time to find out those issues and go out and tell the people. Tell all the people, not just from the Humber - Bay of Islands, all the people in Western Newfoundland. The more information we can give them, the better off we will be.

But I can tell you one thing, and I'll say it again, when you get to that \$500 million and then people got upset because different

things were said and they're being held accountable, we did the same thing to the government in 2016 – the exact same thing. We held them accountable. I think any government that's there that are in government should be held accountable – should be.

But this idea of the questions here today about this here – because when we discussed that this morning, we had the same concerns. This was in the budget, but there's no money there. This was told we got –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

E. JOYCE: Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm just going to speak to the amendment. I think this is actually my first time this year, in 2025, speaking on the budget. I missed the entire week when I was off sick. But, Speaker, I got my notes with me, only to keep me on track because, a lot of times, thoughts come to my head and I go off on a tangent.

I must say the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, I was just going to give you a compliment. The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, who always got a lot to say and is very intelligent and –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. EVANS: No, I'm serious. I must say, I like a lot of things he says.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

L. EVANS: Speaker, to me, talking in the House is a chore. It really is.

So, Speaker, as I was going to say, speaking in the House is a chore, especially when you've got to raise your voice. Your blood pressure goes up. But just actually thinking about a lot of things that happened in this House of Assembly makes your blood pressure go up.

I've been elected since 2019, and I must say, I really do like the comments from the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, especially what he said today. There's nothing like actually putting government in its place. It's true.

I remember being elected in 2019, coming in with expectations and seeing those expectations eroded. I remember just recently when somebody got elected to the House of Assembly, and I was talking to this person, I said, you're going to be shocked at how this House operates, how government operates. You're going to be disappointed because, looking at this person, I knew he came from a place of integrity, hard work and a lot of responsibility. I knew he was going to be disappointed and shocked and, unfortunately, a lot of times when that happens, Speaker, especially when we look at the needs of the province, it makes you angry.

To me, if it wasn't for anger, I don't think I would even bother coming here. Really, honestly. My constituents recognize that in me. They say: Lela, we don't know how you continue to fight for us. The things that I say, I say on behalf of my constituents. The Member that I was saying, who is newly elected, you will be shocked, you will be disappointed, that person that I knew that I recognized the integrity in, that person, I said, also you're going to be angry.

I want to say that person is the MHA for Baie Verte - Green Bay. I saw that anger

come out today and one of the things that I recognize and everybody here on this side recognizes and we told the Members that were newly elected that just come to sit, is the way government performs is a lot about optics – convincing the public that they're taking real action to solve the problems that are harming the people of the province.

Speaker, I'm not looking at my notes and nothing in my notes says anything about what I've just said. When I stand up here, when I stand up it's my opportunity to represent my district and also the people of the province. I've got to say, when I talk, what I want to say to the general public is, do you know something? If you were elected and you came into this House, you would be disappointed. You will be disappointed on how government operates.

You will be angry because of the need that you see, the harm, the pain, waiting 12 to 20 hours in emergency. You're not there because you've got a little ailment. Actually, you're there because you're in a health care crisis or you have no doctor, no nurse practitioner and you need some advice, you need some guidance, you need some care. There are only two reasons why you would go to emergency and wait.

I'll just say because I like talking about things that I know first-hand to be true. One of my friends, one of my acquaintances actually, had a problem with her eye and she went to emergency and she knew something was off but there wasn't a lot of pain. It was just some distortion, here. She said she was waiting hours. She said there was a gentleman there waiting with her, and he was in so much pain. She was thinking, well, maybe I should just go home, but she stuck it out. He actually went home, she said. She don't know what happened to him. She was there for hours and hours, and when she was finally diagnosed, she actually had a detached retina.

Now, anyone who is familiar with detached retinas, if she had gone home, she would

have actually lost the sight in that eye. She was tempted to do it, because of having to sit there, hour after hour. That gentleman that she was there with, in so much pain, and he finally out of frustration and pain, he went home. We don't know what happened to him.

So for us, when we're here on this side – like for me, where does my anger come from? I present petitions, and you know, the attitude towards petitions in this House of Assembly was kind of demeaning. It's kind of almost made fun of. Oh, there she goes again with her petition. Because, at the end of the day, petitions didn't really matter, did it? Do you know what I did? I told my constituents that I have to find ways to change up the narrative.

What I started saying is you, government Members, ministers, are there in the House of Assembly when I talk about the needs of my constituents, they're there. They can't say they didn't hear. Oh, we didn't know about that. Every time we stand in this House of Assembly, we have the ear of government, whether it's on deaf ears or not, and at the end of the day that's all we have.

Like the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands said – I'll paraphrase him now, because I'm not going say about him kissing the wall – but you know something, my colleague, I will say if you don't get re-elected, it's a loss to your district because you do care about the people. Every single one of us on this side cares about our constituents. Every single person over here in Opposition, we don't have a large body of staff; we don't have a lot of access to communications to get that messaging. Most of the work we do on this side, we do ourselves with the help of some staff.

So, at the end of the day, Speaker, when we're talking about the budget, we're talking about the finances that could actually help people have access to health care, be able

to actually afford food, be able to travel within their communities to the stores.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

L. EVANS: I'm not going to raise my voice. No, there's no need to raise my voice. I raise my voice too much.

Back in 2019, I started talking about that freight boat. Oh, there she goes again, talking about the freight boat. But do you know what that boat brought from the Island to my communities? It brought pallets of food and, in some communities, families would get together, they'd pool their money and they'd do an order for the winter. They would. They don't have that ability now, so they eat less, and the food that they eat is not as nutritious.

Now, there are people in my district that actually works up in Voisey's. There are people in my district that have good jobs with the Department of Health and Social Development of the Nunatsiavut Government, or they might work for the RCMP, or they may work for the school, and they have good income. But, Speaker, at the end of the day, I have to speak on behalf of our vulnerable populations. I have to speak on behalf of people that don't have the good jobs, that don't have access to food, that don't have access to a warm, heated house throughout the winter.

In my district, we have many, many layers to our problems. Because if you don't have the income and you can't heat your house adequately, who suffers? Not just you, it could be your elderly mother; it could be your little kids. I got to tell you, Speaker, the problem with that and what makes me so mad is that is where your heart is.

Most people in my district endure hardship, but when they see their kids suffering, it impacts them. When they see their mother and father suffering, it impacts them. So, for me, I have to ensure that at least I'm trying to get something done. Those little petitions

that I present is a way to not only bring forth the issues, but to educate so they can't say they didn't know.

I remember pulling up the cost of a return ticket from Nain to Goose Bay. At the time, it was about \$1,000 and everyone was shocked. The problem, Speaker, is when I raise the issue, and then I raise it again, then I raise it again, it becomes old. The shock is wore off from the ministers over there, from the people who controls the budget, controls the purse strings of the province, controls where the money is going to be spent. The shock wears off. Patients getting bumped off. They can't get out to their doctor's appointment, to their chemo appointments. Some people having a stroke. Kids with broken bones can't get out, have to wait days. The shock wears off.

But the problem for me is I have to keep raising it, because they haven't done anything to address it. I have to tell you, what's really frustrating for me is this last spring, I was reassured by the VP of Labrador-Grenfell Health and head of RT that's for the travel for the health care for my northwest communities that they were going to increase the flights; not just the days the planes flew for passengers to be able to get out to their doctors' appointments, their surgeries, to their diagnosis, to their treatment and be able to come home, the flights, they were going to increase them so that they wouldn't be backlogged.

I was so pleased. I went on social media and gave them credit. Nunatsiavut Government and the Innu Nation was told the exact same thing. We were going to get all these flights. We were going to get more flights on Friday and on Mondays so that there wouldn't be a bottleneck and the patients wouldn't be blocked over the weekend having to stay in Goose Bay and patients would be able to get out to their appointments so that they're appointments wouldn't be cancelled. Imagine going out for an MRI and not being able to actually to get out there, even though your MRI is

scheduled and then having to have it rescheduled again, months later.

So I was promised that. I was pleased; I gave credit to the powers that be. I thanked them, and then all that summer we had even less flights. We have more patients bumped in getting out. We had more patients bumped getting back, including the chemo patients.

To me, it was very frustrating, and people were upset with me. I could understand why because I basically said, you know, this is the increased flights. So that was all summer into the fall, into the winter and I think it was in January or early February I was told, by the head of RT, Lela, yes, we promised you all these flights. We had the intentions of delivering the flights, but we're still working under the old contract. So there were no more flights. We were getting flights if Air Borealis had the planes available, but they had no commitment to give them to Labrador-Grenfell health region. So patients were continuing to be bumped.

We now see the results of patients not being able to get out to their appointments. We see the results of patients not having access to timely and adequate health care. We have people now who are diagnosed too late with cancer. We have people who have cardiac and vascular disease that actually has severe implications on their overall well-being. We have people who suffered strokes and don't get access to the supports that would help in their rehabilitation and recovery. When that happens, it's devastating – it's devastating.

I'm speaking on the budget but, also, I'm speaking every day I'm here in the House of Assembly because, most days, I get up with petitions and do you know what? I'm not going to let anyone say that my petitions on behalf of my constituents are not important. If anyone is going to make fun of me getting up and speaking, that's on them. That's a reflection of them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Also, when government Members get up and say things that are contradictory to what we're saying, at the end of the day, everything that I say, I can back up. I double and triple-check things but if I make a mistake, I will be the first one to admit it. I will. Because, in actual fact, credibility is so important. I've got to say, you know, I always joke and I say I'm only five foot. I'm just five foot. When I was growing up, I thought I was taller. I thought I was bigger.

The thing is, I am very, very lucky. It's May 13 today and my birthday is in two more days, and I've had a lifetime. I've had many lifetimes more than some of my friends. When I was 14, my cousin committed suicide. Do you know something? I had friends and relatives that have committed suicide since then and if I was to list them off right now, I would forget somebody.

I want to tell you, how do you forget a relative when you're talking about suicide? Well, I have to tell you, when you deal with that, there's trauma, and trauma affects your memory. It affects your ability to function. It affects your ability to cope with things and, at the end of the day, you have to be grateful if you can actually function.

When I was growing up, I had one of my best friends – my mom used to kind of tease me because I said she was too good. She's too good. She makes me look bad. Her father was a teacher. Her mother was an Inuk from Nain, and they travelled around a bit. She was a wonderful, wonderful person. When she was in her last year of high school – she was 17 years old – she was murdered.

I have to tell you, that was my first acquaintance of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Sadly, it's not the last. I spoke in the House of Assembly about my sister's roommate, Henrietta. Most people don't know her name, but she is the

Inuk that you'll see when they reference the missing and murdered. She was murdered here in St. John's. Her body was never, ever found. She was my sister's roommate in university.

Even today, now, my sister's retired. She was a schoolteacher. She graduated from university. She went teaching. Actually, she retired as principal of our school, and I'm very proud of her. Every time she'd come out to St. John's and we would be driving somewhere to pick something up, she'd see a landmark that would remind her of her friend. We would drive, my sister would talk about it, sometimes we wouldn't talk about it, and one of the things I always talk about is how you get the cold shivers. You get those goosebumps.

So when I talk in this House of Assembly about suicide rates, I just had – I call him my nephew; he's actually my cousin's son just recently committed suicide. The thing about it is, it doesn't matter if it's recent or if it's 20, 30 years ago, it still impacts you.

Speaker, it's so important when I speak, unfortunately I'm speaking from lived experience, and that's why I'm angry when things are not being done to help us.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Trimper): Thank you very much.

I now call on the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to get up and to represent the District of Ferryland and again, as I always say, certainly thank them for voting me in here and hopefully they have an opportunity to do it again.

It's great to hear the speakers tonight, speaking with a lot of passion. They're

telling real-life stories and that's what they're telling. That's important. There's no BS coming with any of this; these are real-life stories and they're real.

I'm going to touch on some stuff, too. They were pretty heart wrenching, some of those. Some of the stuff that we're speaking about here in the House of Assembly, I'm going to say it's common-sense stuff that we can probably get ironed out and some of the problems go away that we deal with every day. I heard the Member for Terra Nova talk about the waste facilities. It is what I refer to them as now because I did call them the dump, but I was corrected and called them the waste facilities. Anyway, I will use waste facilities.

Some of the rules that they have in place – I think we have seven regional boards for waste and we one for health. That don't make a lot of sense to me, but it is what it is. I deal with one and just some of the stuff that happens in these sites. I'll give you an example. They go up with a double-axle trailer, a Ski-Doo trailer, and they're trying to keep the environment clean. They have all this household garbage – not household garbage, sorry, it's just garbage around their properties that they're trying to put into the facility.

They go up with a double-axle trailer, they haul into the gate, before the card system came out, and they tell them they can't go in with a double-axle trailer. It's hard to believe that they can't go in with a Ski-Doo trailer. So a Ski-Doo trailer, double-axle, can haul two Ski-Doos and they can't get rid of their waste, so they make them leave.

Well, this fellow didn't leave the first day he was up there. He stood right there in the front of the line, took out his jack. He took a wheel off each axle, he towed the trailer in, unloaded the trailer, came out and stopped right in front of the gate and made everybody wait and put the tires back on the trailer and went on. Now, that's how foolish that rule is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

L. O'DRISCOLL: That actually happened. That's how foolish that rule is. That's the kind of stuff I'm talking about, that government puts in and rules they put in and we can't get that stuff ironed out.

My brother has a dump trailer; he does construction work. The trailer is not allowed in there; it's a dump trailer. This is a double-axle trailer that's not causing anybody any harm to bring it in, to keep the garbage into the waste facility but no, it will leave there now and they'll go into Witless Bay Line or they go some back road – and they're in on Side By Sides the other day and they're looking at mattresses and they're looking at dishwashers and they're looking all kinds of garbage in pits that somebody else now has got to go clean up because they couldn't get rid of it at the waste facility. Now, you tell me that makes a lot of sense, that rule. Totally makes no sense.

You know, we get up here and we're just trying to tell you the stories that are out there that can be fixed. I think they can be fixed fairly easy, most times. They can be fixed. The Member spoke about a card system that we use, and the card system now, you apply online – I'm gonna say I applied two months ago, I haven't got my card yet.

So I applied online, same as you get your driver's licence when you apply online to get it, you get a copy back to say it's licensed. Now when the police check it, yeah it comes up online, but you'll take a copy and put it in your car to say, okay, the car is licensed. So now you just did and register to go into the waste facility – it's free to do – but you cannot go up to the facility until you get your card.

Some of these people are showing up there now to get rid of their garbage and they can't rid of it because they don't have their card. But I can show them the copy that I registered online and that don't count. So

they came up with this plan – I'm sure someone in the government is responsible for this – they're two months behind. As he said today, they could have sent out the card with everybody they send out a bill to – now my bill comes to the council in Bay Bulls; I pay the council. But Local Service Districts, they get billed; they find people's houses and they give them their cards.

So they can't show up – and they're trying to do the best they can to make this work properly. You're allowed 16 trips to the site. That wouldn't help some people in the community; they're up there every weekend, but you're allowed 16 trips. That's fair, that should be enough – plenty – to keep the environment clean and put it all in the one facility.

You go up there – I remember myself and a buddy when I first started at this, driving up Witless Bay Line, there was a chesterfield and a couch, in on the side of the road. Foam going everywhere. So we were driving back and forth, and I said, b'y, I'm some sick of looking at that. Let's get out and get rid of it.

We decided, we drove in and got it, put all the Styrofoam in a cardboard box, took it all to the waste facility. They took that, but they wouldn't take the cardboard box that the stuffing was in. So we took the cardboard back with us. Now, that's the kind of stuff that goes on in these facilities. Like, you sit here and laugh, and it is laughable, really. It really is. That's some of the rules that we've got.

I'm dealing with a gentleman now who wants to get a card, and he don't have an email. He don't want to use his wife's email address. He wants a card to go to the facility. He lives in the community; he knows when the dump is closed. He don't need an email for someone to tell him.

We're working around that. Hopefully, we're going to get it – hopefully. But that's not certain yet; this is on the go probably two or

three weeks. Still haven't got a card to go into the facility. He don't want to use an email. I said: B'y, I can give you my email if you want; I got a second email. No, I don't need anybody's email. It's privacy; he shouldn't have to give it if you don't have one. And he should get a card. He's entitled to one; as privacy, he should be able to get one. But no, that can't happen.

That's some of the rules that are just in the waste facility. Imagine now, I'm speaking here now five minutes or 5½ minutes on a waste facility. But that's some of the stuff that happens in the communities. It just makes life miserable for people that are trying to keep the environment clean, and these are just life stories that I'm dealing with, three or four people. Imagine getting calls in your office for the waste facility because you can't get in there. And I know there are rules and there are all kinds of stuff, but that just doesn't make sense.

I will say that I had a good experience dealing with education. I went to a Grade 3 class last week – and I did ask the Speaker, if he gets the Mace tour this summer that, if he could certainly visit the school I was at. It was three Grade 3 classes that were in Witless Bay, and it was a really good experience. I happened to go over there last year as well. I happened to be at a buddy's house, dropping something off and the kids were walking up the hill in Witless Bay on the sideroad to go to the municipal office. They're learning about politics in their classroom – municipal, provincial and federal.

The Minister for CSSD was over there yesterday he told me today – very bright class. I'd say out of the class, there was a good many that were engaged in it. They explained municipal politics. They ask you all kinds of questions. Have you met Trump? Have you met Trudeau? All of these kinds of questions. There were some that were really engaged in the slogans that people had. It was very interesting.

There are three teachers there, with three classes, doing a great job. Just in listening to them, I've got to say it was a great experience to listen to them, just some of the questions they asked.

The minister knows, he was over there and we had that quick discussion today of how it went. There was a great interest in the kids. So they are learning that in school. They asked if you like your job. That was one of the questions I got asked. I said, yes, some days I do, other days I don't, but that's with any job that goes with it but there are things that you deal with, obviously.

I've got to say it was a great experience. The teachers were learning about votes and the system, how it works and the PCs, the Conservatives and the independents and how many people are in the Legislature. We went through it all. I was two hours being questioned, to be truthful. I'd say the lawyer over there had to answer as many questions when he was in court. It was really good, I've got to say.

I'm going to touch on some other things, again, as well. The Health Department – listen, this is not a bottomless pit of money that we've got in the government, and I'm sure that the Finance Minister will sit there and say the same thing. We all want everything. We all know there's a limited cash supply. Everybody can't have everything but some of the stuff that – I heard the Member for Terra Nova speak again – is about listening to the people that you deal with.

You go to the Health Sciences. How can we, as 40 people in here – and I'll touch on that in a second because I go back. We came in here, when I got elected to come in here, to forget about Muskrat Falls I didn't vote on it. No one here voted on it, so we should move past that and figure out how we're going to make this better.

We have to deal with what's there and we have to deal with and move on and figure

out what's best. That's what we're here to do. We didn't vote on it. I had nothing to do with it, and I'd like to make that clear. I had nothing to do with it. I wasn't involved in politics whatsoever, but I've still got to get here and listen to that every day.

I'll move on past it because it's just something that I had to get off my chest, that I never voted. I had nothing to do with it. When I came in here, I came in here with a clean slate. I had nothing to do with it.

Now we're here to make this province better and make everything better for the people of this province, and that's something that we should be doing. Do you know what? We do try. Everybody tries. There are 40 people here trying. But you go back to the Health Sciences. You walk in there, in the Health Sciences, and it's lined off with people.

How can we figure out to make that better? How can we make that better? So go over and ask the people – not the managers, the people that are on the bottom line right there going in through the doors. Ask them people what could make our job easier; what could make it better? What can you do to make this better, to make this system run more free? How can we make it quicker? Is it not enough doctors? I don't know the issue. I know there's an issue there, but I don't know the issue to fix it. But it is certainly a big problem.

You hear the same thing out in Corner Brook, same thing in Grand Falls. So what is the problem that all these emergency rooms are all filled up and people are lining up in the corridors? What is the problem? That is what we got to get to. You could do an inquiry on that alone. How do we make this better? How do we improve this facility to make people not wait?

I had it on my phone, and I spoke on it the last time, for urgent care, seven to eight hours – sorry, just regular care, seven to eight hours; emergency care, 10 to 12 hours, and that's understood now to be

normal. How do we cut that down? I mean one time you'd go to the doctor, after three or four hours there, you go out there and you go in and whatever you had to do, go get an X-ray, and you knew you'd have to wait and it was three or four hours (inaudible).

Now it's 10 or 12 hours. The Member for Corner Brook said 27 hours. I know people out there 24 hours, and they leave and go home and somebody got to call them. So how can we get that fixed? What can we do to make that better for everybody? Everybody included in here, and I'm sure that every Member, there's no one can say that they haven't got a call on the wait times in their health care facilities. Not a chance have you not had a call. No one could put up their hand to say that that hasn't been a problem and how do we fix it.

That's what we're put here to do. I'll go back to the previous Health minister that's no longer here. If we had an opportunity in Trepassey to have a doctor, to pay this doctor on a salary, and the Health minister at the time decided that no, we're not doing that. If they want to do fee for service, they can do it.

But this lady wanted to go be in Trepassey to be the doctor and they wouldn't pay her to do it. But they'll pay someone hundreds of thousands of dollars to move in here and pay them a bonus, whatever it's going to be. But they would not pay that lady who wanted to be the doctor in Trepassey, who's married or engaged to somebody from the area and was willing to go there and they wouldn't make it happen. There's an example of: okay, now what has the government done for that community?

They just had an opportunity to put a doctor in a rural area and they didn't do it. It's sad really, very sad. Now we have a nurse practitioner in Trepassey. There's a nurse practitioner in Ferryland as well, and that area with nurse practitioners is covered from Cape Broyle right to St. Shott's and as

far over as St. Mary's. With the people in Trepassey, and I'll use this as an example, they had a doctor. Right now I think she's in Holyrood, the practicing doctor. They can go over there to see the doctor but if they have something come up and they have to go to the clinic up there, well they can't have a doctor and a nurse practitioner. They have to decide which one they're having. That is sad.

They're in the community, but if they want to see a doctor sometimes – they need to go – but they can't have both so they have to make a decision. I had a meeting with the whole area with somebody from eastern health and that can't happen. You can't have a doctor and a nurse practitioner as, I'm going to say, a client. It just can't happen and that to me is wrong. I mean, they're in the area and they need to go.

They did tell us that you book two and three weeks in advance but they do leave a couple of spots open in the area for people to go visit. If there's something comes up pretty quick that somebody's very sick, they can get in. They leave a couple of spots open every day that, you know, they'll take care of it.

There's another spot in Trepassey as well that the lady can do blood work and she can do X-rays. She's been there over 40 years. Right now she's off, she had some medical issues, but they're making her do training on the X-ray machine. I'm sure they haven't got a brand new X-ray machine gone up there but because she has to do this training – I don't know if she's going to go do it or if she's going to retire. So they're going to lose a person that's doing two jobs and when they go to fill that position, they'll need two people rather than one. That's what's going to happen in that area and that's pretty sad as well. She does a great job there, a great person and hopefully she'll get back to work.

I also was speaking the other day on the person that's donating a kidney to her sister.

Again, her husband, the lady that's donating, he has to go with her obviously but his expenses are not covered. Again, I spoke to two ministers and they're working on that.

I don't want to get up and repeat the same story because I have that many topics here that I'm never going to get them all, but the reason I want to say it: It is not in policy that the person who's donating gets any help when they go. She's going to need just as much help as her sister who's receiving the kidney. When she's finished her operation, she's covered while she's in the hospital, as the ministers did indicate to me. While she's in the hospital, she's under their care and she will get coverage. Once she's finished, she's going to be just as sore, not be able to lift anything for six weeks and all that kind of stuff and she's going to need help as well.

She has to go to Halifax to get it done. She's going to need help. Hopefully somebody is listening in the Health Department or whatever department that is. That could be MTAP as well, Medical Transportation, that they make those policy changes to cover the person who is donating for help as well. I wanted to bring that up just for that reason. Hopefully they can look at that because lots of times this is where we spend some of our time, trying to cover this work and trying to do this stuff for the people that are asking us. It's very important that they get that help. That's the reason I'm bringing that up and for a second time as well.

Again, I'll bring up blood work and having to pay for blood work. To me that's not acceptable, but it seems like everything is changing now. Is it privatizing? He said, no, today, it's not but if you're paying for blood work, it certainly seems like it's privatizing that you're going to go pay for your blood work. You can wait three weeks to get it done but if you want to go tomorrow, you can pay \$25 or \$30. In two day's time, it could be in the Goulds or on Friday it could

be in Bay Bulls for that area – I know what happens there.

How is that acceptable all of a sudden that we have to do it that way? You can't have a walk-in clinic anymore for blood work; one time you could. Again, I'm saying it for that reason that hopefully the department is listening that we can make these changes as stuff goes away. Think about a senior having to go pay \$25 or \$30 more because she wants to get it done. It's not easy for them.

I see time is getting down there pretty quick. I also wanted to touch on Crown Lands. I've been dealing with Crown Lands and everybody here has as well. I spoke to a few Members on it. Yes, we had some legislation come in here, the minister bragging how good it is and what we've done. I don't disagree that it's been great. I don't disagree one bit that a person that has a house and the land that it's located on, that half acre, can go through a quick claim and be done. What about if their house is on four or five acres of land? What happens to the other 4½ acres that they're waiting to get ironed out?

If you think you straightened out a mess, you created a bigger mess and I can't believe for one second that we cannot get this figured out. When I gets a Crown land call I nearly cries. That's the truth because –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, we'll get it straightened out. That's right.

But I mean, yes, he did a noble effort to fix where the house is because I've had a few people call me and we've had some that have been ironed out and working on another one that I do remember asking a few years ago, how long does it take? Sixty days – not a chance is 60 days ever going to get you straightened out in Crown Lands, not a chance.

For the half acre, yes, it helped with the people with a house that are trying to sell their property or trying to sell the house. They can go in and do a quick claim, but if that house is built on four or five acres, if I'm not mistaken – and the minister can certainly correct me, the former minister. If that house is on say four acres, then that other 3½ acres are not included in that quick claim. That is the issue that we should be getting ironed out. If it's their land, if they've been on that half acre for 40 years, they've been on that other four or five acres for them 40 years as well, so why isn't it theirs if there's no one else laying claim to it?

You know, that's something that should have been brought in to legislation and, again, I would say that consumes a lot of time for a lot of people in their districts for sure. We've all had that conversation.

Some other things that I'd like to get into, it's that time of the year now and we're into the crab fishing season and certainly speaking to a good many fishermen. There are a lot of fishermen in my district for sure. It's great to see that it got off on time. There were some worries that it never but just thinking about the industry over all, crab fishing is one for sure and cod fishing is another that there are all kinds of questions on, but some of the seafood that we have here and sit back and think some people are not affected because it's not in their district.

This is not all in my district in all the types of fishing that's out there: You've got capelin fishing, herring fishing, you've got shrimp, you've got cod, crab, lobster, halibut, sea cucumber, whelk, lumpfish, tuna, mackerel, seals and flounder, which I call yellowtail. There are all kinds of products that we could be producing here in way more mass. It could certainly happen, no doubt about it.

The one thing that I would say, getting on with the fishery with my time running down, is the cod fishery that happens in the summer, there's no one looks forward to it

more than my family, my father, but to have to go out on a Friday, a Saturday and Sunday, or Saturday, Sunday and Monday, if that fishery is opened – it was a commercial fishery when it started and you could go out any time. The commercial fishery had come off and it has come back again, then why can't Newfoundlanders and Labradorians be able to get out and go fishing the same as everybody else any day they choose?

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I now call on the Minister of Jobs, Immigration and Growth.

G. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm delighted to stand to talk about *Budget 2025* because it is truly one of the most progressive budgets. When you consider the fiscal challenges, the expectation of a low-tax environment that taxpayers have for Newfoundland and Labrador, I often reflect on the fact that every time we hear a call for increased spending, we hear also a call for increased taxation from the Opposition.

What we try to do, of course, is balance the budget, balance the needs, balance the ability to be able to provide essential core services and provide funding and opportunities for growth while at the same time protecting the very nature that we have around us as a province, which is respecting empathy, compassion and the need to do the right thing for the right reasons wherever we possibly can. Respecting also the fact that taxpayers have a very legitimate concern that whenever there is a call for increased spending, it's also inherently a call for increased taxation.

What we try to do is balance those things, but I can say quite proudly, Mr. Speaker, it's my opportunity today to talk about my district – the beautiful, historic District of Corner Brook – and the accomplishments, the things that have been progressing there in many recent years.

I have been the proud representative of the Corner Brook area for 30 years. Since becoming the MHA for the City of Corner Brook, for the District of Corner Brook, I've had a direct hand, probably more so now than ever before, even when I was in Ottawa representing Corner Brook, Humber - St. Barbe - Baie Verte and Newfoundland and Labrador, their voice in Ottawa, now being the voice of Corner Brook to this Legislature and to Ottawa as well. I'm very, very proud of the advances that have occurred; more work to do. We're going to be doing that.

One of the things that I note – I heard this debate, this time in the Legislature has been somewhat consumed by important history. I heard the Premier provide us with an eloquent, truthful report about the Muskrat Falls fiasco, a boondoggle of a project, as it has been called. I think that's what Justice LeBlanc – *Muskrat Falls: A Misguided Project*, so says a Supreme Court justice of Newfoundland and Labrador's highest court.

Muskrat Falls: A Misguided Project, where our Premier did point out that 2013 was the drop-dead date. That was the date to which no future fix could ever be made possible. The decisions of 2013, under the Progressive Conservative administration – somewhat of an oxymoron sometimes to conflate those two words but, with that said, 2013 was the drop-dead date for which a fix was no longer possible. The rest was, basically, clean up after that point.

With that said, we often hear in this Legislature, in this House, the importance of rural and how government needs to invest. Well, one of the things that we did as a government, we actually created the

headquarters of a significant major department in Corner Brook, outside of the Overpass. It was met with scorn by many Members.

When we act to do exactly what has been suggested, we often get criticized. I will not live in a world where it's impossible to create a win-win scenario, where it must be a win-lose scenario. That's often how Opposition parties must define this because that is the nature of being His Majesty's Loyal Opposition. It is fundamentally to criticize without concern to a balanced approach to it.

I find that most parties in Opposition who do find that strategic, that tactful, that honest balance of being able to provide credit where credit is due, often do better for themselves. That's not really what we're hearing on the floor of this Legislature very often, if at all.

With that said, we created the headquarters for fisheries, forestry, and agrifoods in Corner Brook, located the headquarters for Crown Lands there, and instead of being celebrated, it was actually met with great sarcasm and criticism.

It is functioning exceptionally well. Part of the reason why we were able to accomplish first-ever revisions to the *Lands Act* in five decades, 50 years, was because the department itself was sequestered in one location, agriculture, forestry, two of the biggest land users in our province, with Crown Lands, and that synergy was created that to happen, and it was criticized, again.

Now I will say that I was delighted to have the support of the Opposition on the *Lands Act*. There was only one amendment that was brought forward that was willingly and happily accepted by the government, showing our ability and our enthusiasm for working in collaboration, but it was only one amendment. One that was offered, and we accepted that one amendment. So while there may be criticisms today of what's not

in the bill, we shall always have to remember and point out and they must reflect that only one amendment was offered, and it was accepted.

With that said, a lot of things are happening in Corner Brook. The port of Corner Brook, for example – and I was the federal Member at the time with the port divestiture, which was not necessarily as enthusiastically embraced at that point in time. This year, the port of Corner Brook reported a \$2 million-profit. That is the divestiture, the business opportunities to come from it, we had the highest ever cruise ship landings in the port just last year. We have a major shipping terminus now established in Corner Brook with Mediterranean sea containers, MSC, and others. Big things are happening. We're working with the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, of course, on a diversification strategy.

Obviously, one of the jewels in the crown would be our hospital facilities, our health care facilities in Corner Brook. Under the pressure that all health care facilities, all health care professionals are facing throughout all of Canada, all of North America, throughout all of the Western World, that we are always trying to recruit professionals, especially highly trained, highly expert professionals in our health care fields, not just physicians but other complementary related health care fields, that work is ongoing.

But we should never be, act or consider ourselves an island of thought – we may be an island of geography on the Island portion of the province, with our beautiful, beautiful Big Land in Labrador, being the mainland portion, but we sometimes look at ourselves with exclusivity that we're not affected by the rest of the world. The entire Western World is facing challenges with health care recruitment. We are battling through that through some of the best incentives that will be found anywhere in the Canadian Federation.

But there was an indication here on the floor – and I'm just going to check my time.

AN HON. MEMBER: Twelve minutes.

G. BYRNE: Twelve minutes.

The Corner Brook hospital, of course, has some new facilities that have been allocated to it. There are some questions as to when exactly those new facilities will be up and running; I have those same questions. I'm still working very, very co-operatively with my colleagues and with the senior officials who are really doing the heavy lifting in that regard.

It is the senior officials who, often, we say on the floor of the House that we fully respect our senior officials and bear no criticism to them; we also have to acknowledge that their hard work is very, very difficult and made more difficult when they're criticized on the floor of the House of Assembly, because those are the people doing the heavy lifting.

We are responding to them wherever we can, taking their advice, taking policy decisions, taking budget decisions, taking other decisions to support them, but the heavy lifting is always coming from our senior officials, with the guidance of policy leadership from the Executive Branch.

With that said, there's been a comment that was made, in particular about PET scanner services, laundry facilities, radiation services for Corner Brook. I like to celebrate the fact that there is now a 145-bed, brand new long-term care facility in Corner Brook; 120 long-term care beds, joined by 10 rehab beds and 15 palliative care beds – 145 beds in total, joined with 164 acute-care beds in Corner Brook. That's more beds than what the previous hospital had to offer. One of the reasons why we put that facility in place, the long-term care facility, was because so many of the in-patients were indeed alternative living care patients occupying

acute-care beds. We put that in place for that reason.

Since we are talking about history, we are talking about facts, how things came to be, there was a suggestion on the floor of the House tonight that the PET scanner was a guaranteed commitment prior to 2020, 2019, somewhere around there. I'm not sure exactly the timing.

What I do know is that as early as February 17, 2017, when the acute-care hospital was announced by this government – this is after the long-term care facility was already announced and in progress to be completed by 2020 – there was a decision that was taken and announced on February 17, 2017, that we would go forward with the acute-care hospital. There was a suggestion that was brought forward that said that the PET scanner was guaranteed at that point in time, and the laundry facilities were guaranteed at that point in time – 2017.

So I've been reluctant to answer this question because I really don't like to soil the good news with basically somewhat of a mud-slinging fight. The reality is that since this is an unanswered question, I think it deserves to be answered, put it to bed, move on and make progress on health care for Corner Brook and Western Newfoundland and Labrador. But I found it difficult to find a mechanism to actually unearth the truth, given the fact that often things are covered under Cabinet secrecy, as has been the Westminsterian traditions which are sacred to our form of constitutional monarchy government.

With that said, struggling to find a way to be able to reasonably communicate this so that the facts can be told, it was said to me by a colleague from the other side that there's an access to information request that actually spells all this out. I said: What? I just remembered access to information are listed – we don't know who the inquirer is,

who's the requester. But we do know very much once one is made.

So there was an access to information request that was filed and it called for copies of all emails, memos, text messages, letters, briefing notes, et cetera regarding the PET scanner and laundry services for the new acute-care hospital in Corner Brook between the minister of Transportation and Works and officials, the minister of Health and Community Services and officials, myself, Member for Corner Brook and former minister – and I won't repeat his name because it's not parliamentary to do so, but to say the very hon. Member for Humber - Bay of Islands and former Premier Dwight Ball and Western Health, from January 1, 2017, onwards.

In that document, it spells out on February 13, the release, on about seven or eight or potentially nine different occasions, the question was answered – this is a publicly available document – from 2017: Will the new Corner Brook hospital have a PET scanner or other major equipment? The answer is – and I repeat verbatim – there will be capacity to put a PET scanner in the hospital in the future if demand warrants.

With that said, the decision had been taken at that point in time, in 2017, not to place a PET scanner in Corner Brook. Do I think that was the right decision? I argued against it at the time, as did other Members argue against it at the time, but it was in a balance of issues and concerns that had to be – that is the difficulty of governance. You have to make decisions.

The note goes on to say inclusion of other scope elements of the Corner Brook acute-care hospital in November of 2016. The representatives from the Departments of Transportation and Works and Health and Community Services participated in a value-engineering session with procurement and technical advisors to review the project scope for the Corner Brook acute-care hospital. The scoping exercise was held to

(inaudible) project elements in order to keep expected project costs in line.

One of the underlying premises to the review of 2016, Mr. Speaker, was that since acute-care space is expensive space to develop, project elements that are not critical inside of an acute-care space – in other words, for medical care – should be provided elsewhere.

As a result of the value-engineering exercise, the fiscal forecast was adjusted during the 2017 budget process to account for reduced construction costs and substantial completion of payments, and it was at that point in time that there was a decision to move immediately to put into the long-term care facilities, the 15 extra palliative care and 10 rehab beds into the long-term care project.

The first stage of the procurement process, the request for qualifications, had at that point in time, Mr. Speaker, already closed, meaning that definition was already required and the second stage for the request for proposals is being finalized with a planned release for mid-2018.

So that's important, because I do understand that the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands did indicate that the project did include a PET scanner during his tenure with the government. The facts now bear differently. This was a decision that the government and the Cabinet took while the Member was still in Cabinet. Because, as we know, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands was indeed removed from Cabinet on April 28, 2018. These were all decisions, and the public records shows that, that Cabinet in its budget decision-making actually took these decisions while the very hon. Member was still a Member of the Executive Council.

I would encourage him and encourage everyone to use facts for the presentation of argument and debate. In February 2017, the acute-care hospital was indeed announced,

and these documents come from that announcement which the hon. Member at that time participated in.

When it came to laundry services, for example, there was a decision that was taken – because that was a debate. That was a very interesting debate. It was decided that since a significant amount of money had already been spent at the existing Western Memorial hospital, laundry facilities where they currently, to this day, lay, that they would remain intact, but they would continue to be offered using public employees. That is still the case to this day.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, one of the questions that I have and one of the things that I'm working on very actively is that since there has been a decision that the old hospital, which was built in the 1970s, is still very relevant and still will be used – it's still used for all the administration functions. Now we're putting in additional long-term care facilities into that building. Monaghan Hall, the nursing school, is still present in that precinct, in that campus. I believe there are other uses that can be done. Since the building will still be in operation, the lights will be on, the heat will be on, the air conditioning will be on, the services will still be there, we are actively working on additional services now for that facility that just simply makes sense.

The point of this is simply to say that great things are happening Corner Brook. Yes, there's an appetite to want to diminish them. Yes, there's an appetite sometimes to forget what the truth fully is, that a PET scanner was put in place in that facility not by the administration that existed from 2016 or late-2015 to 2020, it was the administration of 2020 to today that put in the PET scanner and maintained the decision for the laundry services in Corner Brook.

I am very, very proud to be a Member of Executive Council, to be a Member of Cabinet that participated in the decision, that took the decision to make sure that the

people of Corner Brook have a PET scanner. We're very proud that St. John's has a PET scanner that now enables the cyclotron to produce the isotopes. We now have critical mass to be able to produce those isotopes through the cyclotron. Now, with that said, as we progress and go through licensing, Corner Brook will have a PET scanner and it's only happening because the people on this side of the floor had decided to put it there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

E. JOYCE: Point of order.

SPEAKER: Point of order.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you.

The Member just made a statement about an email that was sent that I want to read just to put it on the record.

G. BYRNE: This is a debate, Sir. This is a debate.

E. JOYCE: The former premier –

SPEAKER: How is this a point of order, Sir?

E. JOYCE: It's a point of order because he made statements that I was not involved with the PET scanner being in Corner Brook. It's false. So I'm just going to read to clarify this because he made an allegation that I –

SPEAKER: Can you cite a Standing Order please? This sounds like a debate.

E. JOYCE: Standing Order 49.

I just want to read this here: The former premier, who he mentioned, stated he was

no part of any discussion to put any equipment on hold in February 2021, including the PET scanner.

That was the former premier, Dwight Ball, who made that statement. I'm just letting you know it was the PET scanner. It was in the hospital. It was taken out. The premier himself went public and said he had no discussions to take it out in 2021.

Have a nice day, Mr. Member.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Immigration and Growth, and then we'll try to move on, Sir.

G. BYRNE: Yeah. So, as I explained, I don't believe this was a point of order, but I appreciate the latitude that the hon. Speaker is offering today.

SPEAKER: I'm just holding the peace.

G. BYRNE: I said that I, during the course of debate, was somewhat reluctant to give total voice to the full story about this over the last number of months and years because there are some troubling elements to this. I do remember that the former premier, Premier Dwight Ball – who the hon. Member once sued I think in 2022.

With that said, the premier during 2021 came out and said that the PET scanner was always there. That was always intended to be in Corner Brook. Mr. Speaker, what I –

SPEAKER: I'd ask you to hold your tone, please?

G. BYRNE: What I've tabled is not only evidence of – and I regret this, but this is the nature of factual debate. It wasn't just the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands who was part of – and I was too. We were part of a Cabinet that took a decision at the time to remove the PET scanner. When the former premier, Dwight Ball, came out and said that the PET scanner was always there,

regrettably, he may have had a lapse in memory because it was not in the scope of the –

SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister.

This is a disagreement between Members. We're going to move on.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

E. JOYCE: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: I ruled this as a disagreement between two Members. I do not see it as offensive language as designated under Standing Order 49. I'm moving on with the Member for Labrador West.

Thank you very much.

E. JOYCE: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West, please.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I stand, I guess, to speak about this subamendment –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: You started it, you said (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

J. BROWN: Anyway, thank you, Speaker.

I want to stand, as I said, and speak to the subamendment that is put forward here. I just want to bring up a part of it that kind of sparks some thought in me: to support residents, communities and businesses located in rural areas of our great province. The reason I bring that up is, and I'm sure the Member for Terra Nova who put this better knows the uniqueness of living in a place like Labrador West, we've got that urban feel but we're in a rural area. My

closest neighbour is a 2½-hour drive away, neighbouring community. I don't count Fermont because we just kind of adopted it as part of Lab West in its own way. At the same time, you know, after that it's to go to Baie-Comeau or anything like that and that's 12 hours away.

We have this urban kind of feel but we're actually a rural community. It's a very unique place in how it's laid out and how it operates. I bring up this because of how many times I'm asking about housing and asking about how we get housing built in the community. We've been asking for six, seven, eight years now, trying to get housing built. We started with the NL Housing units that were basically abandoned, trying to get them fixed and residents able to move into them. Then, once we got through that process, which is still not done, we still have two more units to go, plus we have a unit in an apartment that burned, that has to be brought up back to standards, and also, we have to get the two units that burned down reconstructed.

We're making incremental progress but it took so long to get anything out the door with that. Yet that only was a Band-Aid on a bigger wound. We're still lacking actual units because, once we get all these done, they are units that already existed that are just brought back up to standard. We still need to get more units built because we, too, have a long wait-list with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. We also have people that would not qualify for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing that need units as well, in the sense that we're trying to support an industry but also trying to support a community that wants to grow.

We want to move forward, we want to move on and do the thing we do best, which is digging big holes, but at the end of the day, we need the support. We stop and say, oh, well we're not getting that support. We got a footnote in the budget saying we'll work to try to get some housing done, but there's no

real commitment on anything, no financial commitment there, as of yet.

It's really hard to move forward and that's for a vulnerable group of people in our community, which is seniors that have no real way of supportive housing. The houses that they live in now are not really adaptable to a senior lifestyle given ailments and health and mobility. We need units of universal design to help support them as they transition into the later part of their life. That way it does free up homes in the community that a younger family would be more likely to be able to adapt to and move into but, you know, we have a very big list on that.

I think the last commitment, the number that was tossed around was 40 units but, when the project originated, there was 200 applicants or 200 people that wanted units in the community. So 40 out of 200? We're not really getting right to where we need to be getting but it is a start.

Then we talk about the actual people in the community that want to move to our community. Time and time again we have people move in, take jobs, have some temporary accommodation but that can only last so long. Then they can't find anything that they can get their name on. The biggest problem is a house that was built in the '60s and '70s is going for half a million dollars. If you brought that house out anywhere else, it's not even worth close to that much, but given supply and demand there's a bit of a premium there.

So someone who is just starting their career, just starting off in life, can't even get anywhere close to touch that with a mortgage. Obviously, the thing that they do for their family is take a job somewhere else and move back out. Their temporary accommodation is no longer available and then we just lost some young professionals in our community just as quickly as they showed up to town.

I just seen, actually, there was an advertising for a two-bedroom apartment in Lab West, about 100 comments on it, people looking for to go see it and a lot of people were like it needs this. If I can't get this, I have to leave town and things like that.

So it just shows how much of a demand there is, especially within the rental market. And that's the third thing I want to, kind of, touch on is how hard it is to get into that because there's zero vacancy. When something pops up, that apartment that came up today, that probably was within the first three minutes of being posted, that's already rented out, that's already gone.

The hard thing is that there's no other accommodation. The last set of apartment buildings built in Labrador West was in 2014. Since then, there hasn't been any large development, really, of any housing other than what was privately built by the mining companies for fly-in, fly-out workers. It kind of stings when you look and see these massive camps put in the community, you know, put up in a matter of weeks, modular units, and the same company that built those camps is also the same company that built the last apartment building in Lab West, which was a modular building.

You stop and think, oh wow, the mining companies, just like that, they can put up a building for fly-in, fly-out workers, but the community knows that that same company can put up an apartment building and it doesn't happen. You see kind of where the community gets frustrated and angry is when money and production is involved, not a problem, it gets done; when the community is involved, it's backburner.

It's not like we don't have land; there was land donated by the community, by the municipality, for this 40-unit project that may or may not happen, according, I guess, to the mood of the federal government. But there's land across from that that is held by one of those real estate trusts. A massive

piece of land and easily could put up a 100-unit building on, sitting there since 2012 when they purchased it. Nothing been done to it. I think they just store some loose gravel on there.

There's an already sited out and ready to go but never ever finished, you know, multiple streets and a subdivision that never went there. It's not that we don't have land; we have land. It's just expensive to develop. And then you go and look over at our other municipality of Wabush, they had a whole plan laid out for years on where they wanted to go next with their community. Lots of available land to build on, just trying to get a developer to come into it.

The developer comes in and says if you put the streets, sidewalks, the water, the sewer, the streetlights up, you get that done, then we can talk. But if you don't build that, then it makes the units unaffordable, makes the houses unaffordable to the average person, and then we're just back to square one where we have houses that are currently for sale around town that are just not affordable to anybody who's new or coming into a profession. So it's a Catch-22, really, in a sense.

This is where we've been asking for support from government and municipalities to get water, roads, sewers put in, so that way we can actually bring down the cost and actually make housing affordable in all kinds of different demographics. We need affordable housing for seniors. We need affordable housing for low-income people. We need affordable housing for people who are starting their career.

It works in favour of this government, too, because you haven't been able to keep an OHS officer in Lab West in nine years because they couldn't find anywhere to live. They've taken the job, got up there, realized that I can't even find anywhere to live here and have to either be transferred or they quit and move on to somewhere else because their salary cannot cover either the

cost to rent in Lab West or they're just starting their career and they can't go and apply for a mortgage in Lab West.

Someone just starting out in the civil service is not going to be able to go buy a \$500,000 house. So this just doesn't make any actual sense in the sense that houses are priced out of the range of the average person, the person that's starting their career.

There's a whole kind of different demographic on how housing and stuff operates and how the low amount of stock in Lab West doesn't actually fit any of the movement that we need to move forward. People who are starting their career can't afford a mortgage or a house in Lab West. People who are in low-income can't find any apartments or anything that's reasonable in Lab West. Those seniors have nowhere to move in or out of their large or unadaptable homes and move into something that they can actually take care of and help promote their well-being and health because there's just nothing there.

The housing continuum is broken. It goes back down to the sense that it costs more to build in Labrador. Growing up, there used to be a sign in the Rona store. There used to be a sign above the door, and it used to say, prices in-store may not reflect what is online or in the flyer due to the cost of shipping and selling in Labrador. So if you got the Rona flyer in your mailbox and you see something there, the price in the flyer wouldn't match what was in the store because it costs more to get it to Labrador. Mary Browns ads a long time ago, radio ads, used to say the same thing: costs a little more in Labrador.

It's a fact because if you try and do anything with heavy civil or materials, or concrete or anything like that, the prices is exorbitant to try to get anything done. It's partially due to geographics, but it partially also has to do with the mining industry. Because the mining industry, they always get what they want. If they need something done, they will

pay a premium for it. So, most times, things are directed in that direction.

It affects negatively on the community as well because when the community needs something done, they have to pay the same price to get roadwork done or concrete work done or anything like that done because they have to compete with a multi-national corporation that makes trillions of dollars a year. Because if they want something done, they have very deep pockets and they will pay to get it done. Then they have to go on the list.

If they needed asphalt, concrete, heavy civil, pipe, anything, we're paying a premium because the prices are reflected and directed towards the mining industry. It has a very negative impact because then we go back to where we are at square one, we can't get houses built because it costs too much money.

Developers from St. John's have come up and priced things out and realized that they can't get a return on their investment that they want. They'll get a return on their investment, but it's not to the higher standards of what they want. I was a bit miffed about that as well when you think about that a little bit of an exorbitant profit has to be made in order to make them build something. But, at the end of the day, they want a profit, and they want a certain percentage. But they realize when they try to price things out, it's going to cost more in Lab West to build.

Then once we go back to the thing where the municipalities are trying to come up with ways to bridge that gap, and one of them is obviously having road, water, sewer, streetlights, sidewalks, everything put in before the developer shows up and try to bring the cost down. But these are the things that we're trying to get done because we want to get people to move to Labrador West. We have opportunity in Labrador West.

We have a big list of projects and stuff that are coming forward that we need people in Labrador West to be there for. We also need health care workers, we need doctors, we need teachers, we need OHS officers and we need people to actually work in the service industries. We need people to work in the mining services industry. There's a whole gambit that we need to make sure that we can actually move forward, but we're not getting the support on a community level to have the municipalities help do their lifting to get these things off.

We want to be able to have more houses built. We want to grow the population. We want to be able to expand and do the things. We have over 200 years of proven resource left in the ground that has to be (inaudible).

So we want to be able to do that as well. We want to be able to continue on and we don't want to resort to the alternate resort and follow the path that our cousin community Fermont went down, where they allow fly-in, fly-out and where they did see how that decimated their community. There are less kids in their schools, there are less businesses in their communities and there's less real community left there. They do what they can. They're a great little community.

A lot of it, a bit of their soul was ripped out at that point and now they're realizing that after speaking with municipal leaders and stuff from Labrador City, they realize they have to change course themselves and now they're pushing back against that. We need to be pushing back against that as well because we don't want to see a large portion of our community as just workers flying in and out. They don't put the kids in sports. They don't go up to the mall. They don't participate in community events. They don't do any of that.

They just come in, they go to the camp, they work, they turn around and leave. They don't support our small businesses. They don't do any of that. So why should we

reduce down to that just because of where we're to? We've been a community. We've been there since 1959. There has been a Carol Lake/Labrador West, Labrador City, Wabush since 1959.

Does that mean that we reduce ourselves, we sell our soul to the aspect of fly-in and fly-out because we're not getting the support from what we should be getting? That's where I say to this government we want the support. We want you to be able to support us to stay a community, because the alternative is not that good.

By turning a blind eye to it, it does send a chill through the community, knowing what's coming. We've already seen portions of it. We've already seen a huge amount of people who do fly-in and fly-out for work, but with the new mine here that's saying we're not in the housing business, we're in the mining business and proposing an 800-man camp to be built and that we see nothing out of that.

I think they're talking a bit of mining service, a bit of garbage collection but, other than that, they'll be flying in and out. Because right now all the camps and stuff like that, they don't buy all their produce or goods or anything like that from the local community. Right now, those camps get all that pre-shipped in from Quebec. That's not help to the community.

Some of the workers that even actually operate the camp, the kitchens and stuff like that, they're fly-in and fly-out workers themselves. So not even local community even gets some of that aspect of how those camps operate that we currently have right now.

This is where we have to stop to think and go, well, is this what we want for our community? A community that's inside this province, do we want to make them diminish themselves or lessen themselves for the almighty dollar? No, absolutely not. That's why we ask for support. We want

help. We want government there at the table to support the residents and communities and business located in rural areas.

Well, we'd like to have this little urban feel in Lab West but, at the end of the day, we're a rural community and at the end of the day we also support this province significantly with our GDP. We have two of the largest mines in this province. Two of the three largest mines in the province are in Lab West and the other one is Voisey's Bay. We are a massive community. We have a massive GDP.

Like I said, the last time I got up and spoke, I said my wife works in the mining industry. Every day that she works – she operates a locomotive, her and her crew, and they ship out over 200,000 tons of iron ore. So that's a run of her day for my wife.

This is where we have to say, hey, this is where we need support from our community to keep us a community in this province. Because, at the end of the day, if we don't and we turn a blind eye to not helping with the housing problem but also turning a blind eye and allowing fly-in, fly-out, we're going to get 800 workers and the majority of them are going to fly in from Quebec because I can guarantee you that's what happens.

So either you help the community, build the community and help us move forward or you're just going to end up with 800 fly-in, fly-out workers from Quebec, because that's what's going to happen if you don't deal with the situation right now.

That's where we go back to making sure that we have housing for low-income workers. We make sure we have housing for seniors. Make sure you have housing for everyone, because right now there's housing for no one.

We seen that we're missing opportunities. We're missing out on things right now as it is, because people can't stay. We're

missing out on the ability to actually recruit properly. We can't recruit if we have nowhere to put anybody. We seen it before with the education system. Some apartments were freed up in the building that was owned by, I guess, NL Schools, is the name that it goes by now. They were able to free that up. That actually helps. That actually helps support some teachers to actually come to the area.

It was a small, little ask that had a big result and return at the end of the day, but it still does not fully fix the situation because we still have vacancy. In the school system, we still have other workers that work in the system that need to be recruited as well, but it was a small ask that turned out to be a big help.

Now I need a little bit of bigger ask for bigger help. That is to try to get units built in the region. To make sure that communities are supported to be able to have the ability to build units. To make sure that we can actually support workers in this province, to support people in this province.

Like I said, the last time I got up and spoke during the Resource Committee, was that there's a face to the resource industry, and those faces are the people of this province. They're the people who actually work in these industries. They're the people who support these industries and they're also the people who support the families who work in these industries.

It is a circle. It is a continuum of how each person supports the other and, at the end of the day, what do we do? We make sure that we turn a natural resource of this province into a resource that pays the bills; to make sure that people have health care; to make sure that people are supported; to make sure that we can continue to do the things that we do in this province, what makes us one of the better parts of this country and make sure that we are a fantastic place to live and work and everything like that, but the people who make it that way are the

people who need to be supported by their government.

So as my time winds down, Speaker, I want to thank the people of Labrador West and the people that I represent because, at the end of the day, they're a great, hard-working bunch.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I've been looking forward to standing up here because we've been here in this House now for a little over eight hours. I'm going to propose something a little different. I'd like to be able to have two surveys in my little address here tonight before we call it a night.

At some point in time, the Members may even put up which scenario they may like best, if you want to participate. If you don't, that's totally up to you because we're in a democracy, whether you participate or whether you don't. Even security can join in and raise a hand which one they want to vote for. That'll come a little later.

I just want to discuss, tonight, children, the child and, in particular, our K-to-12 education system. When we're looking at the child, we went through Estimates and we got several divisions of government that deal with children, ones that may be in K-to-12 education system. We went to and attended the Children, Seniors and Social Development and when we talked of children, one thing that stood out was that we have a lot of children in foster care, homes being provided for them, which is great.

We have children that would be in group homes in care that we think – and the

Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board mentioned tonight that there was \$168 million spent with children in care. The numbers in care are going down. She accurately stated that the numbers in level 4, with the most complex needs, are going up. That is a concern.

The concern, which we discussed in CSSD, was making sure we're preventative when we get in at the ground level and, before they become level 4, let's try our best to make sure we intervene as best we could earlier, not later.

Then we've got the justice system which we look at. We have a lot of children that are within the justice system, of which the courts make a ruling and if the courts make a ruling in Family Court, they don't enforce the ruling. It is often for the betterment of the parents and the child but, often, nobody enforces the court order and, thus, the cycle continues.

We talked of poverty. Two things are worthy of note when we look at poverty is that 60 per cent of the people experiencing poverty have not graduated from high school. They don't have a high school graduate degree. Another thing is that 75 per cent of the children in Grade 6 who are chronically absent do not graduate from high school.

So we're looking at key indicators. We're looking at poverty and we're looking at absenteeism. We knew some years back we had a system that we had 10 per cent chronic absenteeism. There was a study done. I can't recall in this House any numbers being given to us that would talk about where the absenteeism rate would be today in 2025. I would suggest that if the absenteeism rate is dropped below the 10 per cent, would we have heard about it? And I'm thinking yes.

Another indicator when we look at the school system – and I know my colleague for Topsail - Paradise has talked about the violence in schools. We've all

acknowledged it. We have schools with violence, and we all, 40 of us, wish to address it. We want to address it.

When I sat in Estimates in 2020, they gave five previous years of teacher sick leave. If you were in a work environment that there were a lot of challenges, you will find that the sick leave usually increased. Keep in mind for all of us who attended at the Gardiner Centre, we did our understanding workplace harassment and stress session with Dr. Dianne Ford. That was back in October of 2024; we all did that. She said higher absenteeism is a red flag.

So we don't know the absenteeism rate. We haven't heard that, but here are the teacher sick leave, the ones that were provided by the Department of Education back in 2020. In 2014, there were 287,000 hours lost for a value of over \$15 million, the cost. In '15-'16, 305,000 hours lost, a little over \$16.5 million. Instead of going through '16-'17, '17-'18, which we might not get to the surveys, I'll go out to '18-'19 – over \$18 million and 319,000 hours lost in the school system. See the increase? It was 287,000 hours to 319,000 hours. That is an indication all is not well.

Well, for all those people watching now before the Winnipeg and Dallas game, you're not going to change stations now until 9:30 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

C. PARDY: It's true. People in Bonavista are still watching until the game comes on.

I had made two, three inquiries to the Department of Education, wanting to update my data. I didn't share it with my colleagues. I just wanted to know the data, as a past educator, as one that would hear over and over again – like I said, my colleague from Topsail - Paradise asked about the violence in schools and we all agreed, we've got to get a handle on it – one of the indicators is the sick leave. They could not provide the

sick leave. The government couldn't provide it, or they did not provide it to me. I respect – that's fine. Didn't know what I would do with it, maybe – I just said that I have five years and I just wanted to update it, but they couldn't provide it.

One thing I did ask about – I know that we've talked lots about, and even in Committee with the past minister of CSSD, we did discuss the poverty reduction plan that this side had put in that got national recognition. It led to the question in the House that I had asked, and the then Education minister asked – I asked, what are we doing and what actions are we taking within education to reduce poverty?

To make a long story short, after the third time, the answer was a school lunch program. I would say to you, that is meritorious. Nobody got a problem with a school lunch program, but is that going to solve the issues within the school? Is it going to address the poverty that we've got out in our society, and I would say not. If that's the only educational aspect that we've got to a poverty reduction plan, that doesn't cut the mustard. That doesn't do it.

So here's what I want to pass on to you. Let's say that there was a job available out there and the qualification for the job was that you are an MHA. If you're an MHA, you're eligible for that job. That is the qualification that you've got. You really have to be elected and a representative. So the job comes up, but the system or the Public Service Commission says who automatically gets the job will be the most senior MHA. Forty MHAs applying for the job, but who gets the job will be the most senior MHA. In this case, it would be a good Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Most experienced MHA.

So you know what the job is and I would say to you, that is how the job is awarded. Now,

my first survey here in this House would be, do you think that's a good way of filling a job? If you say that yes, that's a good one, probably raise your hand. If you would think that it is not the way you would do it, raise your hand.

We have a lot of abstaining on the other side, Mr. Speaker, but that's fine. We seem to have a consensus over on this side of the House, but here is what I contend. Here is what that survey states. When I was principal of a school, and I'm sure the current minister over watching me in his education day, when we had an opening in our school, we took eight applicants. We looked at their qualifications. If they're qualified for the job, we took eight. Then we brought them in and we interviewed them. A member from the school board, the principal, the vice-principal and, often, we had another person, it might be a teacher that be involved and we interviewed. We selected what we thought to be the best candidate for our school.

Now, that's the way it was done. But what changed? Here's what happened now. In 2019, this government, in negotiations with the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, they were shocked when government came in and offered positions mobility for permanent teachers on seniority. Here's where it works. You got qualified for the position and you're suitable for the position, then all of a sudden, a job comes open in some part of the province. If you're qualified, which means they're looking for a science degree, then if you've got the most seniority, that's your job.

The Member across from me will know that there was more to the school than the delivery of the curriculum. That is the most important thing, but we have what we call the co-curriculum, someone that brings a lot of life to the school, engages the kids in some other activities, whether volleyball, basketball, art, music, drama. We select the ones that would be the best for our school. I would say to you, this side here, we were

pretty well maybe unanimous in deciding that that's not the way to do it. Which would you prefer?

I would say, Mr. Speaker, here's what happens. We've got rural and we've got urban. You'll know that any position that ever came up in urban, you probably had 100 to 200 applicants, 300, 400 applicants. You go to some remote parts of Newfoundland and Labrador – I know in remote parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, you're probably down to two or three interested applicants.

They come into the system. They get hired into a remote area in the system. They gain their seniority, and then the mobility starts. You gain your seniority, and then all of a sudden, Mount Pearl high school opens up and we have somebody satelliting in that competed for a job with probably two others or one other or the only one, and once they get into the system, they go right into those schools that are metro schools.

Can the principal have any voice in that? My understanding, from what the administrators are telling me now, no. Public commission admitted they're looking after it now. They said that in Estimates. Public commission is looking after the hiring of teachers. They're following the collective agreement. It's a different world.

The president of the NLTA in July 22, 2019, at 10:29 in the morning called in to Paddy Daley and he explained the process. What I just explained to you, was what Paddy was asking him. That is what the then president of the NLTA had stated to Paddy. Because if one is qualified in one school, they're qualified in another school, and therefore movement should occur. But we would know that 40 MHAs, if the qualification is that it's got to go to the most senior one, think about it. There is a difference in what is required in different settings. That, in my opinion, is the colossal mistake of government in 2019 in your collective agreement, and that is how I feel.

So we're talking about government said that they're going to fix poverty, and one of the parts of their action plan to fix poverty was to start the school lunch program, to put more money into it. I would say to you, that's scratching the surface – a good thing, but scratching the surface. The other thing we talked about is violence in schools, and the second survey we've got coming here now – and I thank this side for participating, and security, because this is wonderful. Eight hours here in the House and we've got some action on this side, hands going up.

Here's another situation. We have two schools; one school, children that want to play a sport, they practise during the summer some time, the team is selected in early September, they've got one team and they may have 600 or 700 students. Students who wish to partake in sport don't have the opportunity. There are very few clubs in this school. That is school A. But school B, whoever wants to play, there is a team for you. That means if you want to play volleyball, we can get three or four teams, then, boy, we want you involved in school.

I would say to you, and ask the question, which school do you think is going to have the most, better school climate? School A, which has its teams selected in sports before September begins, or school B where everyone who wants to play and participate has got a team that's playing? Is it school A? Hands up. School B? Hear, hear –

AN HON. MEMBER: What grade?

C. PARDY: What grade? It doesn't matter what grade.

Now, those who are not voting across the way, for the viewers watching, they're shouting out now saying which grade level? As if that makes a difference, but it doesn't make a difference what grade level it is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I would say there were schools out there that got five teams in a grade level, everyone participating, and we've got schools that would be double the size that got one team and they're predetermined before school opens. I would say that is not going to have somebody identify with a school. That would be an issue.

Hard to believe 19 minutes is gone and I only got one minute left before the viewers in Bonavista go to change over to watch the game, what perfect timing.

Let me conclude one last point. Mr. Speaker, in my time, if we had children with exceptionalities in our school, they had a specialist who was trained on staff, an instructional resource teacher who was trained in working with the children who had difficulties with school, who had exceptionalities.

The system now, apparently, you don't have to have that training. You can go into that position without the training and try to help those with exceptionalities in the school. I would say if I had the vote again from this side as to whether that's the right move, we would vote that that is not the right move.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the MHA for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, this is a great opportunity to speak on the budget again, especially, an urbanized, non-rural budget. I guess that gives some indication to how I'm going to vote on this budget. I was confused for a little while what I would be speaking on. I wasn't sure if it was the Muskrat Falls debate or budget

debate. I think, right now, I'll stick with the budget.

I have many things to talk about and they kind of tie together. So I'll make a start with a couple of things here first, and I want to say that I'm happy to see that there's a repeal taking place with the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The level of conversation is getting a bit loud. I can't hear the Member speak.

J. MCKENNA: – sugar tax. That's great because we've been pushing that for a long time here. We're also going to see free vaccines for 50-plus, which again, we were lobbying all the time for. But there's a good reason for this. There's a good reason for that and we all know what it is because, just out on the horizon, there's an election. If this wasn't an election year, this would not be off the table.

I want to just say that we all had an Easter break, but I had a very, very busy Easter break. I was out in the district most of my Easter break. I was doing a couple of events. I was invited to a few meetings.

Anyhow, I had the pleasure to speak at a firemen's banquet in CWT, which is Centreville-Wareham-Trinity. When I saw the community spirit there and the togetherness of people and how they pull together and how they supported their community and their fire departments, it was unreal – it was unreal. I was flabbergasted about that one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: We had 250 people to dinner that night. Now that's the kind of support that's in those communities, and that's what rural communities are all about. There's a lot of support out in rural

communities, there's togetherness and we're alive out there – alive and well.

The next weekend I was invited to the firemen's banquet in Gander Bay and, again, the community spirit there that they got done, I have to put kudos to fire chief, Shawn Bauld, and deputy chief, Lindsay Earle. They have a new fire truck going to be delivered in September. Do you know what? They own it. They own it right out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: I mean, that's community spirit. Also, the firettes, they support the firefighters.

AN HON. MEMBER: Very important.

J. MCKENNA: So that's very important. That is definitely very important.

I then was invited to a few other meetings with the councils, and in the Local Service Districts, and, of course, I get the same thing from them. But not only that – I have to backtrack again; I missed out a point there with the fire departments. What I was hearing from the fire departments was the medical response and what it's costing them. It's cutting into their budgets and it's hurting them with their budgets.

This is why this government has to look at it in this budget to compensate that cost. I mean for the medical supplies, the gas that they burn, and everything like that. Not only that, they're taking a lot of time away from their other firefighting capabilities, and that makes it very busy. Some people couldn't even handle it, it was that many medical calls, that some of the firefighters quit because it's just too much stress, and too much stress on their families.

Then I went on to meet with Indian Bay Ecosystem Corp. Now that's an organization that's been on the go for years. They do a lot of cleanups, they look after the trout, they look after the salmon, they

make sure everything is cleaned up and they do a lot of other different things, cleanup in the forest and everything like that. They were funded pretty well good over the years, and they employed a lot of people over the years, but they're not getting the funding that they need, and it's getting to the point where they've got concerns. That's the kind of thing that we should be putting emphasis on, is corporations like that.

Then I also met with the Cape Freels Development Association. Same story, their funding is cut; I think they might be only able to employ less than 20 people this year. The last couple of years they employed 99 people. That's the kind of funding that's being cut from that, so that goes back to rural economic development, and that's where we started from back in Newfoundland in the rural areas years ago, they formed development associations and other organizations, and they lobbied money and they came out with programs.

I know the district because I'm from the district, and it's a very productive district. Right from Fogo Island, right up to Hare Bay. The industry there, it's unreal; we've got Cran-Pac Foods there that's employing people, we have a boat-building business there in Centreville; it employs probably 30-odd people. We have a woodworking plant there that employs quite a number of people. I don't know about right now, but a few years ago there was never EI drawn in Centreville. Nobody was ever on EI, worked all year round.

Then I went out to visit the plant in Dover. This one I was flabbergasted at. They got an operation there owned by the Barry brothers, and that plant has been in operation for a nice number of years. That plant is operating right around the clock – not right around the clock, sorry, yearly, 12 months a year, and they got over 200 people employed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: That's awesome.

So when we talk about rural Newfoundland and the things that are lacking and the supports that we're not getting, it's not fair play. It's not fair ball. I mean, we know ourselves the lack of health care and the lack of home care. I spoke about this many, many times. I've met with people who fairly cried to me, older people. They didn't want to leave their home, yet they couldn't afford to stay there because they had to pay so much into home care and the worker wasn't sure how much longer she could work there because she was underpaid.

If we want to put rural Newfoundland back where it should be to, then this has to come back to us. We're paying road tax. We're paying all kinds of taxes. We're putting big money into the economy. I think it's only fair that we get something back in return.

When you talk about health care, I met with the council on Change Islands. Last year during the by-election, the former premier went out and promised two doctor visits a month to Change Islands and a full-time nurse. They started off with the two doctors and when the doctors realized what was going on, the Internet is not strong enough to do their work, as everything is done by computer and everything right now, go in and see your file and everything like that. They gave them an ultimatum: to strengthen up or fix the Internet or bring in another system and they will come back. I talked to one of the doctors, Dr. Gibbons, she said I'm not going back until that Internet is up and running to perfection.

I talked to the mayor and the deputy mayor, they even got a house rented for a nurse out there, all the year round but there's never a nurse – no competition put out for a nurse to apply to for out there. So this is something that should be seen to, that's an island and that's isolation.

Also, we were promised an extension on the Fogo Island health care centre and that's 13

months ago. We don't know if there's anything in this budget this year or not, and we lost our family room when COVID hit. They had to take it for extra equipment and stuff like that.

This is the kind of money that we need put back into the rural areas of this province. I think we lost out with our health care when we took away our boards. When we lost our Central board and we lost our Western board, that's when our health care started to fail, and the same thing with education. We had our school board in Central. We had our school boards in Western and everything was running good, but after the decisions were all made in here, in urban areas, we went downhill. We're still going downhill. All of this is that I'm talking about here right now is tied into transportation. That's one I'm going to touch on now in a minute as well.

I also want to talk about the transportation in the New-Wes-Valley area and down towards Carmanville area, the state of the roads, the state of brush cutting, no ditching done. I had a call from a couple down in Badger's Quay, last week their house was flooding out. Their basement was flooding out because the ditches were full and running over. He said that was the second time that he had to get his basement pumped out. He had to redo it again with gyprock and he doesn't know what to do.

So I got in contact with the depot down there. I talked to the manager and he went up and they took a look at. He called me back and he said, he can't make the decision; his hands are tied. The engineers need to go in there and fix the problem. It's not a simple fix; it's something that's been going on there for years. We're lacking a lot of supports when it comes to that infrastructure.

I want to get into the dilemma that we're going to be facing, the crisis that we're going to be facing pretty soon on Fogo Island, we're about to lose the Labrador

ferry, Lela's district. Another two weeks she's supposed to be sailing if the ice conditions allow. Up to today, there is no plan for Fogo Island for the ferry. There's no plan whatsoever; don't know what they're going to do, don't know what they've got. I mean, they just took the *Veteran* out of service again the last couple of days – more breakdowns, right? What's going on with our maintenance programs and stuff? I don't really know.

They spent a fortune on those two boats again and put new motors and everything like that into them. We're at a situation right now down on Fogo Island that it's the peak of the fishing season and we've got a lot of transport trucks pulling in the product and out product. We do have a problem when the *Kamutik W* is there sometimes with the high tides and, last winter, I brought it to the attention of Transportation and they did know it too. I said, well, do up a mobile ramp, something you can put there now temporarily that can suit the loading and offloading. All I got back, yes, okay. We're working down there right now. It's under engineering, and this was going on for months. Another two weeks and the boat is gone, still no ramp.

I don't know why everything is just falling apart, no emphasis put on it because we're in a very busy tourist season coming up, too, right now. I mean I saw the evidence of that last week when we had a few icebergs down there. There were a lot of tourists come in to the island. The Fogo Island Inn, which is a fairly big attraction down there, that hotel has 29 rooms and that hotel was booked solid last week. Every room was solid. There were helicopters on the airstrip. There were SUVs coming on the ferries. They do have their own fleet of SUVs that they drive to Gander and pick up and everything like that.

So we're alive and well down there, I'll tell you that right now, but we need support.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: We need support and I'm going to keep lobbying for support for my district. That's what I'm here for. You've never heard the last of this, I'll promise you that much.

In the meantime, I just want to give you some figures. The Shorefast foundation, because I spoke about the ecosystems and Indian Bay Ecosystem Corporation, they're working in conjunction right now with Shorefast association and they're collecting green crab. That's the project. The cleanup of green crab, that needs to take place so we have something around Fogo Island area and Change Islands area. That's the project they're on right now. They have about, I think, eight or 10 on Fogo Island hired and then there are more going down from the association up here in Indian Bay, right?

So that's another project that's headed by the Shorefast. The Shorefast is making a lot of products, especially furniture, and that's being shipped basically all over the world. It employs numerous people. I found this out the other day – I got a report on it because my daughter works at the Shorefast foundation now and she's brought the report and showed me – they employ 234 people on Fogo Island, part-time and full-time, yearly.

So you think the districts, the rural areas are dying? No. No, we're just being neglected. We're being neglected and this budget here is not going to do anything for us out there for our economic survival or anything like that. We need an injection out there. We need some infrastructure done. The roads are in a horrible condition out there.

I had an email just this morning from a gentleman in Gander Bay. He said my wife and my daughter work in Gander and I'm scared. I'm very scared, he said. The brush from Gander Bay to Gander is horrific. It's horrific. You can't see a moose until they're right on top of you. He said yesterday they counted nine moose between Gander Bay

and Gander and today they counted 10 – 10 moose.

I drove up through the shore when I came in here because I had meetings. When I left Clarendville, low and behold, he jumped up on the road, but lucky enough it was dry pavement and I was far enough away that I had control. Then, when I left New-Wes-Valley on Saturday morning, just got on the highway and here comes two more running across the road. I mean, you know, in areas where there's heavy brush and you can't see, you don't have a chance. You don't have a chance.

When I went to that banquet down in Centreville, I drove down from Hare Bay to Centreville. I was talking to a gentleman that wanted to see me there in Hare Bay. When I went in, he said, you're going out to the banquet? I said, yes. By God, he said, please be careful. I said why? The moose are unreal right now between here and Hare Bay, he said. He said, my cousin, the other night about 10:30 I got a call, and he said he was in shock. He said what's wrong – I just hit a moose. I don't know where I'm to or what I'm doing. He gave him the directions. He went down. He demolished his brand new car completely and he said I don't know how he got out of it. The moose went clean over the roof of the car.

For the sake of what it costs, I think we need, right now, not to wait. I think right now we should act on that brush cutting. That's a very serious issue. I mean, you all know what it's like, just look what we got cut here for the new divided highway. Look how good it looks. You could see a moose way over there or way over that way. This is something that we need to clean up as soon as possible, as far as I am concerned, before someone else is killed because there are people after being killed, numerous people.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. MCKENNA: Yeah.

So I'm saying we should concentrate on rural economic development, like we did years ago. Get back into the swing of things. Let's bring back our hospital boards and bring health care back to Central and Western Newfoundland. Let's do the same thing with our education, our school boards, I mean this is where we failed. This is where we failed.

I mean, when I talk about transportation, all those things that I'm talking about here ties in with Transportation and Infrastructure. Everything I'm talking about here ties in with Transportation and Infrastructure. So that's the biggest part that we're missing down there right now; for the short term is the seriousness of what's going to happen to us on Fogo Island.

I don't know if you recall but just after I was elected last year, we got into a crisis. I got in this House and I fought and fought and fought until they done something about it. I don't want to go having to do that. I don't think I should have to do that. You all know, over there, where Fogo Island is to, and probably you don't – I don't know if you haven't been down there. Perhaps some of you have never seen rural areas of this province. I don't know. But if you didn't, you should take a ride. Take a ride, go down and look at what we've got around us, and look at the production down there.

So I got, I think, about a few seconds left. I'm going to lobby, and I'm gonna keep lobbying, because I've got a few more stories but I just don't have the time to tell them when it comes to health care. I'll leave it at that right now and maybe I'll get a chance to speak tomorrow or next day.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

I wasn't necessarily planning on speaking this evening, but I guess the spirit moved me.

Mr. Speaker, I've stood in this House numerous times and talked about things like health care and education and home care and child care and all those types of things that are important to people, certainly in my district and to people around the province. I've also talked about, in terms of debating this budget, our province's finances – our overall finances, our crippling debt, and the need to try to get our finances under control.

I want to just talk about tonight the political system itself and people's impression, sometimes, of this House of Assembly, of all Members, and it reflects on all of us. I often hear my colleague from CBS talking about if you want to get a good feel for our people, go up to Tim Horton's and talk to people and so on, and I do that all the time in my district. I'm usually up to A&W most mornings, in Mount Pearl, if anyone wants to come buy me a coffee. Sometimes Tim's or McDonalds as well, there are different groups of people that hang out at all these – you've got the same groups every day hanging out at these places. It's a good way to get how people feel.

I don't think it's any big surprise to any of us in this House that people generally do not have a great opinion of politicians in general. I think that's fair to say. A lot of people don't. Next to lawyers, probably we're the most hated. I can't imagine being a politician who's also a lawyer, that would be pretty brutal. But you do, and I ask myself what are the types of things that really get under peoples' skin? And I reflect on what are some of the things that get under my skin?

I know we just had the federal election. I will be the first – I don't mind saying – I supported our former colleague Tom Osborne in my district. I voted for Tom; had his sign on my lawn. It was not for the Liberal Party candidate; it was for Tom

Osborne. If I lived in St. John's East, I would have voted for David Brazil, I'll say that 100 per cent as well. But there was no way I was going to vote for Justin Trudeau.

It wasn't just about people talk about our country's finances, the debt that's gone in, all that spending and so on. That wasn't really the big issue – and oil and gas, their position on oil and gas was a big one for me, I have to say, and, of course, our fishery and equalization. Those are three, I suppose, tangible policy issues, but the big issues that really turned me from the Trudeau administration – and I'll scratch some of this now, where some of the things like the issue around SNC-Lavalin; the issue around Jody Wilson-Raybould; the issue around the Avacon; the issue around ArriveCAN – I think the Conservatives called it Arrive Scam, is what they were calling it, but anyway, ArriveCAN – the issues around the WE Charity. These were the things that really turned me from the Trudeau administration.

Now, I have to admit I wasn't a big fan of Mr. Poilievre, so it kind of made it easy when Tom ran because I could support Tom, the person. When Tom was here – we all know Tom; I've had a long history with Tom. When he was a minister, I could call him up on his cellphone or whatever, he would call me right back. We had a very respectful relationship. We treated each other with respect. He would get back to me, we would talk about things, he would listen and he would try to help, and I give the man credit. So I supported him for that reason. But it was those other issues, I just talked about, that turned me from the Trudeau administration.

Now I just want to take that, sort of, concept and apply it here on provincial matters. Some of this goes back to the Ball administration and the Furey administration and so on – and I'm not saying this just to pick on the government. I will be the first to say that I'm sure we can go back in history with the Williams administration, the

Dunderdale administration, Peckford, Wells and Tobin and we can all find these things, but I think these are the things sometimes that rub people the wrong way. It certainly rubbed me the wrong way and I'm no saint. Believe you me, we all know that.

But things like, for example, the Muskrat Falls inquiry and the fact that after we had that inquiry, nobody was held accountable. That really rubbed me the wrong way, especially as somebody who voted for it, after being told all kinds of stuff that simply wasn't true. But nobody was held accountable.

As a matter of fact, everybody walked out with the old golden handshake, the \$6-million man and a bunch of others. Senior provincial officials just moved to another department or another government entity. Nobody, I guess, possibly knew where the skeletons were hid, I don't know, but the bottom line is, nobody held accountable for the Muskrat Falls inquiry.

We had DarkNL. We couldn't keep the lights on. Their main focus of NL Hydro at the time, or Nalcor, was to keep the lights on. They couldn't keep the lights on because they weren't doing basic maintenance. All the executives got their full bonuses. Why? Because they had a great safety record. Imagine, they had a great safety record. They couldn't keep the lights; everyone was in the dark.

There was a person in my district who actually died during DarkNL. He died in his shed with a generator. He got poisoned with the fumes, carbon monoxide, actually. We know in the Village that the ceiling collapsed and the seniors moved out of Maplewood, I believe. There were all kinds – everyone got their bonus.

We also discovered – because I can remember Dwight Ball at the time, talking about he was going to get the information on the embedded contractors, that nobody could get, because guess what? Nalcor was

exempt from ATIPPA. So we couldn't get the information on these ludicrous contracts, where everyone was just putting in their own hours and everything else and obscene amounts of money, no accountability and Premier Ball at the time was going to get that info out there. He went to Mr. Martin and said, no, b'y, you're not getting it. To the premier of the province, no, you're not getting it. ATIPPA, I don't have to give it to you.

I thought for sure we would have corrected it. So when this administration or, I guess, the former one now, under Premier Furey, we bring in legislation and we're going to get rid of Nalcor. We're going to have Hydro and we're going to have OilCo. Guess what? When we created those two entities, still exempt under ATIPPA. That's this administration – you can't blame that on the PCs – kept that secrecy. I spoke to it in this House numerous times, kept that secrecy, the secrecy is still there today. It rubs me wrong, rubs a lot of people wrong.

We saw the Auditor General's reports on Memorial University. First, on operations, absolutely scary, then on infrastructure – two damning reports. Who's been held accountable for that?

The former president of MUN, well, they got rid of her for maybe that and other reasons. I feel like she's kind of the scapegoat, but she was only there a short period of time. All this didn't happen under her. But guess what? Nobody held accountable, and now we're going to give them money in the budget.

I'm not against trying to deal with the infrastructure needs, but I've asked in this House of Assembly if we're going to give them money, are we going to be having oversight? I couldn't get an answer. Are we going to have oversight to make sure that this money that's being given for capital is going to capital and how it's going and who's monitoring it to make sure it's spent

properly? We can't get an answer on that. So, to my mind, there's no accountability.

We had the land. Kenmount Crossing: Crown land sold and now bought back for, I'm going to say, twice what they paid for it. I'm not sure the exact amount, but –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Three times?

AN HON. MEMBER: Four.

P. LANE: Four times. Buying back our own land for four times what we sold it, Crown land, and other land available that we could utilize, but we're going to utilize that land. It puts a bad taste in a lot of people's mouths. Puts a lot of question about the integrity of the system.

Then we have the Snows Lane land. There's another one, very similar to the Kenmount Crossing land. We had the Canopy Growth – remember Canopy Growth? Remember that numbered company that nobody knew who owned the numbered company and so on, and that deal on Canopy Growth. That was another one.

The old airport hotel – we're going to lease it for \$15 million for three years. We could have bought it for \$3 million. People shake their heads. People are asking me; I'm shaking my head. The issue with the travel nurses – the insane amount of money we spent on travel nurses and nobody knew until, all of a sudden – it was no proactive disclosure about what's going on until someone dug into it and found out, and then all of a sudden we're on defence about the travel nurses.

The secret Rothschild report that we spent – what was it, a million dollars on that one? A million dollars.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Five million dollars and nobody can see what's in it. Nobody can see what's in it. The Green Report – that's another one, was the Green Report.

Then we had a report supposedly, when we were in this House and we were getting rid of the school boards, and putting it all under the Department of Education. It was based on a report. I said to the minister, can we see this report? You want me to vote to disband the school board; show me the report with the recommendation you're talking about. Oh, it's a Cabinet document; you can't see it.

Then we had the legislation when we combined our health care authorities and never consulted the Privacy Commissioner, and then we ended up having to withdraw a whole pile of legislation because nobody consulted the Privacy Commissioner, and there were all kinds of flaws when that got rammed through the House.

My colleague for Grand Falls-Windsor talking about here we've got the Lionel Kelland Hospice, a shortfall of \$250,000, providing life-ending care for families in Central Newfoundland and Labrador. We can't find the money for that, but we can spend \$250,000 for an office of the Premier that we don't need.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: The soccer team.

P. LANE: Yeah, the soccer team. That's right, the soccer team. The money that we wasted on the soccer team. That was another one.

Here are some of the other things that I just jotted down here. The government promised democratic reform, and we started a democratic reform Committee. We were looking at campaign finance reform, got EngageNL involved, just about to put out the public information on it, we called an election and that was the end of it. When

the new administration came in, let's scrap democratic reform.

We had a report about fixing the Independent Appointments Commission. I talked about it last night. Because there are three names that come forward for positions that go through the Independent Appointments Commission, but the minister can take all three and run them through the shredder and put whoever he or she wants, and we would never be any the wiser. So we had a commissioner last year do a report saying that's wrong and it needs to be fixed. They never implemented it.

I have to ask the question, why is it that every construction project in Newfoundland and Labrador all seem to go to the same company? Are there any connections anywhere? I don't know. But these are questions that people ask me all the time.

We had the whistle-blower report. We remember the whistle-blower report. I remember it very, very well, the whistle-blower report and how the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, the shortfalls there and how we got around not bringing that report forward.

Then, because the Citizens' Rep had the nerve to do his job, the first thing we do is we put him under investigation. That went nowhere. After putting him through a whole pile of stress, but that went nowhere. Then, we have Officers of the House of Assembly going after me, personally, twice, on unfounded nonsense, bullying and harassment, intimidation for doing my job. Trying to keep me quiet. Not going to work. Never will.

You know, these are the types of things – and now, of course, we find out today about the \$500 million not disclosed in the budget.

S. COADY: Yes, it was.

P. LANE: And the minister said, oh yes, it was. If I went with a fine-tooth combs and started poking through everything and trying to figure it out, but it certainly wasn't proactive disclosure. It certainly wasn't in the Budget Speech – it certainly wasn't in the Budget Speech.

AN HON. MEMBER: Exposure.

P. LANE: Yes, public exposure, not disclosure. Exactly. That's exactly right, which is why, up until this point, I was going to vote for the budget – I was thinking about voting for the budget. I voted for most of the budgets, actually. Based on that action alone, there's not a chance in hell that I'm voting for that budget. Not a chance based on that. Just as a matter of principle, I cannot do it.

In my closing couple of minutes, pointing out some of these things that leads one to have a lack of faith in the integrity of our system, what are some of the things I would like to see us do? What are some of the things we could do, some things I would like to see us do? Some government, if not this one, maybe the next one. Openness and transparency has to be more than simply buzzwords.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: (Inaudible) you can see right through them.

P. LANE: My colleague from Terra Nova just said we actually have the most transparent government in Newfoundland and Labrador history because you can see right through them. Anyway, it is funny. I've got to give you, that's funny.

Campaign finance reform: Let's actually do campaign finance reform. Let's look at recall legislation. Let's look at dealing with the issues around blind trusts. Let's look at numbered companies that are doing business or getting tenders or getting grants from the taxpayers. Let's look at that, at

numbered companies. Let's look at lobbyist legislation.

Let's do a review of our *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, because quite frankly, as it currently stands, in my experience – I'm only going by my experience – it is not worth the paper it's written on. That's my honest opinion based on my experience. It needs to be reviewed. It needs to be tightened up, and let's put in mechanisms to prevent any kind of political interference when it comes to Officers of the House of Assembly.

We have Officers of the House of Assembly. They're supposed to be totally independent Officers, totally unbiased Officers. We have to tighten up the rules and all the mechanisms we have in place to ensure there's no way that political bias or direction can interfere in Members' rights in this House of Assembly to represent their people.

I should be able to stand up in this House of Assembly and my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands, who's also been under a lot of scrutiny and put up with a lot of abuse as far as I'm concerned, as well, we should be able to stand in this House of Assembly and tell it like it is and be honest and state our opinions, vote for what we want to for, vote against what we want to vote against and raise matters of public concern without fear of some kind of vindictive retribution.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: With that said, I have 27 seconds left, and I know Members are disappointed, but I want to see the Leafs win too. Are they playing tonight? Oh, I'm not going to see them win tonight, okay, but anyway –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: For 24 hours, okay.

Anyway, I will end it there. Again, this is not about trying to dump on this particular

administration, but it is about the integrity of the system.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. the Member for Waterford Valley, that we adjourn debate on the budget.

SPEAKER: It's moved and seconded that we adjourn debate.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, that this House do adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

I do remind Members that at 8 a.m. tomorrow, Members are invited to the

Speaker's room for the pre-part of the Moose Hide Campaign, and the actual ceremony will take place at 9 a.m. here in the Chamber.

Have a good night.

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