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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 5:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

Admit visitors.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, budget debate.

SPEAKER: Okay.

We are now debating the subamendment of the Budget Speech.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A bit of technical issues there and I got a colleague who's going around in crutches so you kind of got to move aside to those people, hey?

Speaker, it gives me great delight tonight to stand, and this is my final opportunity to speak on this year's budget. This is actually probably our final time to speak about the budget; a new election will be a new group of people in there, or some new and some old, the next time a budget is debated in this House, so it's kind of one of them moments that I thought about this week actually. It does make you reflect. I think most times I stand there and I speak, I always refer to it, you have them moments of reflection. It's been 10 years for me and I know a lot of Members opposite – I know the Minister of Finance, we got elected the same time.

There have been a lot of budgets and a lot of debates, and every budget cycle that goes by – and the last couple of days I've had the opportunity to listen to a lot of debate. It's pretty interesting, this is probably the only one other time in the run

of the year in the cycle of the House that people get that free-will opportunity to talk about things that matter to them and to people in their districts and the people in the province or even their own personal interests. In between that, you hear lots of personal stories and some humorous, some are quite funny. A lot are quite funny actually.

Now, some not so funny but that's all part of it then. There are times, you know, and sometimes in the debate and during the Question Period, temperatures rise. Sometimes in there it gets pretty tense and there are other times that there are moments of levity and everything is very calm. We see that often and over the years. We see it, but I've always said it's a very important part because it's about passion. Everyone has passion.

Every single Member in this House has their own passion, their own desires, their own drive. We don't always agree but it's always something that I've always respected and it's always something, no matter where I am down life's road and none of us are no longer in the – we're in retirement or off to whatever we're doing – I think that's something that you'll always reflect on, because that's always something I reflected on.

I think it's very important that everyone that comes in to this House of Assembly, they come in with the right reasons. They come in and they do it for the right reasons. We may not always agree with the decision, but I think it's very important to highlight that everyone elected, when you put your name on a ballot, I really think you come in to make a difference for your community and for the people of the province. Ultimately, the jury will decide. The public will decide down life's road, but I do believe every one of us come in with the right intentions or the right things at heart and we do our best to make a difference to the people Newfoundland and Labrador.

I think we all keep that in mind. It's something I'd like to remind, and I think we all should take great pride in it, every one of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: When the next election comes, whoever comes back, whoever goes on, I think that that's something we should acknowledge.

I know the former premier, no doubt people out there and people in here know that me and him never seen eye to eye on a lot of things, but we did see eye to eye on a lot of other things. Upon leaving, his final day I had a personal exchange with him. It was kind of that tone; it was respect for each other and the jobs you have to do. I have a difficult job in my role and he, obviously, in his role.

We acknowledged that and I think that was one of them moments again that it's important to recognize that. I know one time – I believe he said it to me: It's a small group; there are only 40 of us and you're representing an entire province. So it's a small club and beneath it all, I do believe there's a level of respect. Sometimes we have our moments and they're – the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave is grinning. We do have our moments but I think that, at the end of the day, we try our best.

Speaker, in my time, there are a couple of things I think are important to bring up and, firstly, in my district that I'm very proud to represent. There are a couple of things: I asked yesterday, actually, there's an urgent care centre required. It's not needed, it's required for Conception Bay South. You've got a district that's nearing 30,000 people, some are in my colleague for Harbour Main's District and some are in my colleague for Topsail - Paradise District.

We have no health care service in Conception Bay South outside of paid blood

services. I've said this for years in this House and I understand that you wait your turn. Again, 10 years in and I've been asking for it for years. It's been promised. Ministers previous have said, we're doing it. I know the Health Accord, Dr. Parfrey and Sister Davis acknowledged that it's needed and, I think in the plans down in previous years, it was always in the works. It was always something that was discussed as needed.

You don't have no public transit. You're a 30-minute away drive. You're in the vicinity of 30 to 40 kilometres away. You can't walk. You can't afford a taxi. If you haven't got family, which a lot of people around it's not family base anymore, and you've got no public transit, how do you get to the health service when you have no other services available? You've got family doctors around if you're lucky to get one. I mean, I've got one. I made an appointment recently in April, early April, and I think I don't get the virtual appointment until late June. That's virtual, a phone call. I got to wait almost three months for a phone call.

So I know in the scheme of things, I don't think I have a doctor. She's a wonderful doctor, but if I've got to wait three months for a phone call, I don't have a doctor. I should be added to that list, and I've always questioned that list. Me and the former minister, the current Minister of Health, in essence, this year we had that kind of debate to and fro. The current Minister of Justice now, he stated he wasn't going to argue with the NLMA numbers – I know he was the former president of the NLMA – and how they recognized the family doctor shortages.

We keep saying 165,000; I think government says it's 50,000 to 70,000. I'm not sure of that number, that moves. The Premier when he was minister of Health, I think he was stuck on 60,000. That doesn't mean you have a doctor, that means you're rostered to an urgent care centre. That does not mean you have a doctor and in

Estimates, me and the Minister of Justice, who was the minister of Health at the time, agreed on that. You could go in, you could access one of the professionals in that clinic but that doesn't mean you have access to that doctor. There are staffing issues. There are various issues. It could be to a physiotherapist. It could be to a pharmacist. You don't have a doctor necessarily, but they're removing those numbers from the 165,000.

I repeat, again, we have got a serious issue in this province. It's 165,000 people without a family doctor. You can look at this as a politics question or whatever. I mean, the Liberal administration has been there for 10 years; that is the crux of the problem with our health care system. We can look at the wait time for MRIs, cardiac care, we have pediatrics, surgeries – the list of all the services in health is gone – we have nursing issues and that.

Family doctor shortage, access to primary health care, is, in my opinion and I don't think anyone can dispute it, the number one issue that's driving our health care concerns in this province. People can't get in to see a family doctor for primary health care, they backlog emergency rooms and, not only that, it's more complex. There's more snowball effect. They get sick. They have health issues. They're not going out to the emergency room. I've heard it from my own mother: I'm not going out waiting there for 12 or 14 hours, or 20 hours; I'm not going doing it.

Is anyone tracking how many people actually don't make it? How many people get that indigestion and that discomfort around their throat, their breathing is bad and they think, oh, I'm getting the flu. You go to bed – we're not tracking that. I'm not fear mongering; I'm being really realistic about this. We're not tracking it. I've heard stories and I think most Members in this House have people they know or friends that have done that.

I know personal stories of people who have done that, their wives or their husband or whatever were saying: Go to the doctor; we got to get you to the hospital – I'm not going out to the emergency room tonight. I'm going to be out there all night. I'm going to wait. They waited and they're no longer with us; that's true. I have colleagues here, I look around, I think most people can attest they can hear the similar story, but that's not a Liberals or a PCs or anything problem. That's a fundamental problem with the system where you have to acknowledge that it's a serious problem.

Right now, the Liberal government are in power, it's your problem. I mean, if it changes tomorrow and the PCs are in government, it's our problem. It's how you deal with that problem. We continue on with that number and we never seem to be able to find the solution to knock it down.

Again, everyone says the Health Accord is a wonderful document. This past week, I was at an event, there was a couple of town councillors, and they were having a conversation. They were praising the Health Accord. I was, very good, and I was sitting there and I was listening – and I mean I know they don't support the party I'm with, but that was fine. We had a great conversation, but they kept praising the Health Accord. I said: Okay, well, fine, we're going to agree the Health Accord's a wonderful document, but what about implementation? Well, that's the issue. I said: Well, exactly.

So if we don't keep speaking about that issue, the implementation, is it a good document? It's only as good as what the results are. Right now, the Health Accord is not doing what it's intended to do. It's all well intentioned, I'll be the first to say. The former minister – he's the current MP now for St. John's – former Minister Osborne. I can say his name I guess –

AN HON. MEMBER: Cape Spear.

B. PETTEN: Cape Spear.

I mean when he was Minister of Health, we had this debate many times. I kind of lost my train of thought there on that one, but we had that debate. It goes right back to when we had the discussion over that issue.

Mr. Speaker, the further we go along, as time goes on and we don't deal with these issues, this will continue, and I mean continue to spiral because we have this family doctor shortage, and that will, in the end of the day, cause a bigger problem.

To go back to Minister Osborne, the point was – I knew it was a minute issue, but it was an important one at the time. They made an announcement back about the emergency rooms. It was a big plan; he had a news conference. Being the critic, I was there, and I listened in on it. It was announcing these big changes to ER, going to improve everything in ER. That came across good.

I go down that same day, and I visit my mom. B'y, they got the emergency room situation fixed up. I said very good, how do you figure that? Well, I just listened to the news, and they were on, they got it all fixed. There are no more backlogs. I quietly had to look at my mother and said that's not actually going to happen today or tomorrow. It's years out. I think the minister at the time said it was five to six years before you'd see any improvements in that.

Now that's an implementation thing. I know it can't happen immediately. I get all that, but that's a core problem. So you're going to fix up the emergency rooms to make it more comfortable for massive amounts of people. That's fine, you have to do improvements to the emergency room, but until you deal with the family doctor shortage, you'll need emergency rooms the size of the Confederation Building because all you're doing is making a bigger space.

We have ambassadors down there. Something else that I advocated for – I don't know if that it had anything to do with them coming there, but I thought we were losing empathy in our health care system. I spoke publicly on it and I showed pictures about it. People down in the waiting rooms, lying in the chairs. Seniors, 80- and 90-year-olds are all brought in an ambulance, put out in a steel wheelchair, lying down with a blanket under their head in the waiting room for 12 to 14 hours. Okay, they're triaged and they're not considered to be urgent. But my God, where does society go when you can't give that person a comfortable chair to lie in and give them a pillow, give them a blanket? They are our seniors.

Now I will say – I'll use my mother again as an example because it's a good speaking point when it comes to health care. She did go to the hospital there recently and she did get brought in and it was much better service. The ambulatory care centre, that seems to be something to – I'll give credit. Walked in, it was quickly done; it was very organized. They had an ambassador there. They called me at home. I quickly went up to the hospital. They called when we were there. Like, it was really good.

So, I mean, I'm not being critical. The emergency room was full, but the service that way – so that's an improvement. But that's one of many improvements needed. All the while, that 165,000, plus the people who supposedly have a family doctor, we could be looking at 200,000, the list continues to grow.

At the end of the day, we hear the government opposite are constantly praising themselves and the improvements they made in health care and where we're heading to with health care and how great everything is in health care. When I hear those comments, I question what health care system are they going to? They can't be going to the same one we all are. They can't be in the same hospitals we're seeing around.

That's the problem, and sometimes there's acknowledgement of your problem, acceptance that you have a problem, and dealing with it head on instead of trying to, I guess, be political and try to hide behind platitudes, words, news releases, promises, because at the end of the day, our society is struggling. The health care crisis – I'll say it again – you can bring out all the issues you want when you go on an election campaign. I will guarantee you when you go knocking door to door in the next election, health care will be the number one issue, right alongside the cost of living. Right now, I think safe communities, crime in our communities is high up there, too,

But, mark my words, health care will dominate the conversation. It dominates the conversation at Tim Horton's, it dominates the conversation at Sobeys, and it will dominate the conversation anywhere you go, any water cooler talk, if it's not them sick, it's someone belonging to them or they heard this or they read this, it dominates.

Like the saying goes, I've always said it and I've heard it said and it was learned as a child, if you don't have your health, you got nothing. You can have all the money in the world. You can have all of everything around you. You can have everything in the world. If you don't have your health, you have nothing. That's a statement I've always lived by and I've always believed because I know a lot of people that had supposedly everything going for them and they were sick. Guess what? That's not a good life. You can have everything else around you.

So that's why I always believed and (inaudible) – as being the Health critic, I've listened to a lot of health concerns every day and it takes its toll sometimes because you listen to really personal stories and they're sad. But we have to continue to fight. As an Opposition, I really believe our role is more important than ever. It's always an important role. In these times when you've got challenging issues facing you, a

strong Opposition to keep government to account no matter what party is on this side of the House, it's fundamental to democracy in our province and our country. Anyone ever diminish the importance of having a strong Opposition and questioning what government does, they don't have a great understanding of our democracy.

A great example of that – this week, several days ago, this lady reached out to me about the shingles vaccine. Why are you whining and complaining about the shingles vaccine? Anyway, I went on down and she said, why didn't you cover it when you were in government? I said, very good. So I did a lot of research. I looked around and I said, the Shingrix only came into play in 2017. There was another one, Zostavax – someone can probably correct me. The Minister of Justice might be able to correct me. There's another name on one that come out and I think it was licensed in 2006.

In my own wisdom, I was thinking, well, vaccines don't become available widespread for governments to cover. It probably took time for it to establish itself, maybe in a cost feature, but it wasn't a big demand for people looking for vaccines for shingles back in 2006. At least my memory doesn't serve me right. It was only in the last 10 years. Anyway, when I responded back, we got into this back and forth and it was like, but what do you expect from me? We have to ask government.

Back in 2006, I wasn't there, but right now we think it's a great idea. We're not disagreeing with the government. Actually, we lobbied for more. We said 65 and over for everyone to be covered. The government announced 65 to 70 and over 70 if you're immunocompromised. Now, I know the current Premier who has come out and said he wants to give it to everyone 50 and over. We never said that's bad. I don't think anyone went on record here. We want to know when. I think our leader asked are you including that funding in the budget to bring it on now.

The point I'm making is we're actually on the same page. We want what's best for people. We want what's best for the seniors. We came up with the idea. We questioned why didn't government go far enough. This lady, in particular, took great exception to us challenging government when we didn't do it when we were in government. I mean, respectfully, we debated. We didn't agree. I tried to be as frank with her and being honest but, I mean, that's what you deal with.

Sometimes you have to sit back yourself and think about what you're doing. It comes down to the point, I said, we have a job to do. It's not always easy but this one here wasn't hard. We never complained because government are going to cover the shingles vaccine. I spoke right away after the former minister did. I thought it was great. I think we should go further. That's all. What's wrong with that?

That's an easy one. We challenge our government. We argue, as Opposition, on much more divided issues. These are ones we're together. I think out there in society, people don't understand your role. It's a very important role. It's one we have to do and it's a challenge sometimes because sometimes people may accuse you, you're being negative. I hear that, too. Being negative is not accurate either.

Unfortunately, that comes with this role. I've talked to someone who served several years in Opposition – a few with me, actually, without saying who it was – and they said it started to drag them down because they felt that they were constantly having to be the devil's advocate. You always had to play that role.

But that is our role. It's His Royal Majesty's Opposition; it's to oppose. Not to oppose for the sake of opposing; it's to challenge government. But by challenging government, you're opposing their decision is what it's like. You're questioning their decisions; you're not agreeing with it. You

want something to go further, or you don't like this idea or what about this idea, that's the spirit of debate. That's what this House is intended for. That's what we're all elected to do. That's what we're brought in here for.

People in my district, and I'm sure every other district in the province, they know our role. They like the fact that you speak up for your district; they like that fact that you speak up for seniors. Government gets credit for delivering to seniors, delivering to their districts, delivering to the people. That's the way it works out. How we get there – that's what I started off by when I started off my comments 20 minutes back – is we don't always agree. But, at the end of the day, that's where we're all coming to.

You go around, you can fight about everything, we'll disagree – and as you can tell, most of my speech was on health care. We're not on the same page with the government on health care. But we want the same results. We've just got different ideas on how to get there. We don't think these things are working; we see it in a different way. There are certain things we might try the same way, and there are certain things we may fail at. But if we don't try, we'll never know.

If we go in government next year, or next month, or whenever, the people on this side of the House will have to do the same thing to us, and it's a very important thing to be done, and it needs to be done. If I'm sitting over there, I expect to be challenged; we should be challenged. It's a part of the role we're elected to do, and it's part of the role that I take very seriously.

But it's challenging, and no, it's not always easy. I know some people might think it's easy on our side; it's not always easy over here. A lot of preparation goes into sitting on this side of the House. A lot of preparation, a lot of work, and there's a lot of stress and a lot of expectations, and you're struggling to meet those expectations.

We all have districts, no difference than anyone in this House, and every district has got their issues, and we've got to try to find solutions to them. All we can do is stand up for the people who elected us like everyone in this House does.

On that note, Speaker, as I sit down, I wish everyone all the best in the future elections and onward.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Oh, they give me lots of time.

I'm going to stand here first and thank, once again, the residents of the District of Stephenville - Port au Port for putting their confidence in me to come here to the House of Assembly to represent them and the issues they bring forward and issues of concern to them in our district. I'm very humble and proud to be able to do that.

Of course, like every other district in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, we have a lot of the same issues that we've heard lots of discussions around. That being around the roads and the condition of our roads. Route 460, it's in terrible shape and there is nothing in the budget that will help improve that this year.

Wheelers Road, a one-kilometre stretch in the community of Noels Pond, owned and repaired, I should say, by the Department of Transportation, right now, I don't know when the last time a grader was even down there. It's a dirt road. It used to be a paved road, but I think what's left of the pavement down there, it's probably more dirt than pavement.

So again, those are some of the things that we've identified, things that ought to be

done. We all recognize that we have lots of roads in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and lots of roads that need repair. That's why I'm so adamant that we ought to be putting out a plan that is detailed and people can actually see when their roads will be done. Not simply waiting year after year after year.

One of the things I want to start off with, though, as I stand here, before I get into the main crux of the budget, is I want to celebrate. It was great to talk about *Canada's Got Talent*, but as anybody who watched that show or watched the results last night – and it was spoken about earlier today, Newfoundland and Labrador's got talent – I want to give a special shout-out to Jacob Lewis from Butlerville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Not only on behalf of myself and the PC caucus, but on behalf of all Newfoundland and Labrador. What a tremendous achievement for that young man and his family. I can only imagine the sacrifices that he went through and the effort that it took to be able to get to that level.

For those of us that follow those shows, it was tremendous to watch him as he went through each session. Quite the success, and he has made our province once again a very proud place and a very proud people, and I think there isn't a single soul in Newfoundland and Labrador that wouldn't be shouting out to him. So I'm glad to be able to offer my congratulations as well.

Speaker, we are in a budget debate. As part of that budget debate, we've had lots of interesting conversations, lots of interesting questions, lots of discussion around Estimates and numbers. I always think it's important to try and understand again – and there are still questions on some of the numbers. I want to start off, of course, with something that has been raised yesterday in

terms of what we include or don't include in budget numbers.

We all agree – I mean, the Minister of Finance is not wrong. Every province in Canada and territory, I would think, follows generally accepted accounting principles and there are standards which we use when we recognize revenue, when we record revenue, when we record expenses. Those are standards that all accounting firms and everyone else uses to prepare their financial statements and ensure that they are accurate and up to speed.

Unfortunately, in one case or, for whatever reason – we still don't know – we have chosen as a Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to be different than every other province in Canada when it comes to how we record potential revenue that we will get some time down the road from this tobacco settlement. We've decided to record that revenue in this year's budget. Every other province in Canada has taken a different approach apparently and are waiting to record – some are recording the amounts they receive this year; others are still trying to figure out exactly how they will record it.

Why do I bring this up again? Because I think it's very important when it comes to perception of where we are and what it really means. When I went through the Budget Speech and I listened to the line in there that said: "Our deficit has decreased from \$1.5 billion in 2020-21 to \$373 million estimated in 2025-26, which represents three per cent of revenues."

Now, there was no asterisk here or anything or following sentence to say that included in the revenue, in this year's budget, was \$500 million in revenue that we hope to get or will get some time down the road. There's no reference to that, in that comment.

If I'm standing here or people at home are following along, they'll say, well, we only have a \$372-million deficit. But as my colleague asked in the House again today, if

the \$500 million from the tobacco settlement, which you will get down the road, wasn't put in this year's budget, what would the deficit be?

I thought that was a legitimate question because we've decided to include revenue that we will get in the future, in this year's numbers. It's not to be negative, but I don't think we've ever got the answer why. I know we've got lots of answers around, we got to do it, or we're required to do it and all that. I understand all the general accepted accounting principles. As I said, I think every province in Canada has to follow them, but for some reason, we have a different standard, or we've decided to do it differently, and so it creates this perception that we're putting in revenue that we have not yet received or will not receive until some future time down the road.

I know that we've done it in the past under the Atlantic Accord, where the federal government has guaranteed revenue, and I think there's a little different circumstance. I remember back at that time that it was clearly explained, clearly outlined about exactly what we were going to be doing with that \$2 billion that was clearly outlined, but in this particular case, this \$500 million was not clearly identified. It wasn't clearly identified.

It wasn't in the Budget Speech. As a matter of fact, you almost have to go through the budget Estimates and find a line item under fines in small print in here to see where the number of fines collected has gone up significantly. If you look at the comparison of what was there last year and what was there this year estimated for revenue, you'll come up with exactly that same number \$532 million whatever it is.

So can they say it's there? Sure, it's there, but without somebody having to go through and dig out and ask about it, there was absolutely no mention in the budget itself, in the Budget Speech, nor here as an asterisk in the budget document itself to highlight,

put a little note by it to say this includes. None of that was there. The perception by everybody was, the deficit is \$372 million. Technically accurate, but again, perception, and without telling people that it included that \$500 million.

Again, the question, if that \$500 million was not recorded as revenue, would we have a \$372 million deficit? I think the answer is obvious. No. The deficit would be much higher. So that's part of the challenge we have with this budget. Part of the whole challenge of what we're looking at in terms of numbers.

That, to me, is simply – yes, I understand all the accounting regulations. I understand all that, but I also understand the need to be open and transparent, and I also understand the need that if we're going to do that, then people should know exactly what's in there without having to go and dig and try to go through an Estimates process or anything else.

Why? That's the question: Why? Why is it in there? Now, we could get all kinds of reasons why and speculate. We've heard from other experts. We've heard from people in the media stories, their speculation around, sounds like it's there because of an election. That's been out there in the media. But the fact of the matter is it is there. It is recorded differently than any other province in the country. We stand alone when it comes to those types of issues. So, again, I ask, why?

Now, the other one that I want to talk about is the actual contingency fund that we know has been put in the budget to deal with the potential of tariffs. Again, when we ask questions about whether or not the \$200-million contingency fund was part of the deficit number, or why wasn't it included in the deficit, the minister provided us with an answer and said this is not how we record the contingency fund. Last year in the Estimates, there was a \$22-million contingency fund, and this year it's \$200

million. We know why, because we're setting aside for the tariffs. So those numbers are in the book, but they're not included in the deficit number.

However, once we start to spend that money, what happens? Where does the expense get recorded then? Once we start to spend the \$200,000, where does that expense go? Does it become part of the rest of our expenses? Because that's part of what's happening here. We've got a \$200-million contingency fund. We all recognize why. We hope we never have to use it.

But, at the end of the day, once that \$200 million starts to be spent, where are the expenses recorded? Where are they reflected? Do they get reflected in our general revenue and expense? When they become expense, does that then have an impact on our bottom line?

That's another question that perhaps we'll ask for another day. But those are our reasons why some of this in the budget, we've had great discussion on, but we still don't know why we treated the revenue from the tobacco settlement differently than every other province in Canada. I think we can all pretty well do the math and figure out that if we didn't have it in there, our deficit would be significantly higher. So those are the things.

But that's a perception we were left with, and that's not something that we ought to be doing. I think simply explaining it better, perhaps an asterisk or two around why the revenue is there, highlighting it and we wouldn't be asking those questions, but we do. We have asked, and I think those were great questions that needed to be asked. I still don't know, as I stand here tonight, why it was included. I have to speculate, but I still don't know why it was included.

Then we want to get into some of the other issues when we talk about transparency and accountability and what's happening in our province. We go back to some of the

deals that have happened that we've seen because of lack of planning and expenditure. Why are we spending more and getting less? I would argue it's simply because there have been no plans in place for many of the things that have happened.

We have talked on many occasions about the comfort inn and the significant costs of running a program and taking a lease for three years at \$7 million a year for a hotel that was on the books for \$4 million. Why was that decision made? It was made as a reaction, because we did not have a plan to deal with affordable housing in this city. So the government reacted; reacted by taking an unsolicited offer right to the premier's office, no tendering, no requests for proposals, no nothing. Somebody knew somebody and a deal was done. The next thing you know, our province is on the hook for \$21 million, plus the operating costs associated with it.

I know of at least two other operators here in the city, hotel owners, who told me that they would have loved to have an opportunity to bid if we were going down that road. If that was the road the government was choosing to go down, to lease hotel properties, they would have loved to have an opportunity to bid on that type of a contract. They never got that opportunity. The openness, the transparency, the accountability was not there and, as a result of that, we wound up paying more than perhaps we should.

We've talked a lot about travel nurses in this province, and I am familiar with the use of travel nurses. We use them at Lab-Grenfell Health, but we didn't pay the exorbitant rates that are currently paying. When we did use them, we made sure the first people we called was the Nurses' Union, to work with them on ensuring how we could take advantage of nurses from our own province who were willing to travel to Labrador to do locums for us.

But how did we as a Province of Newfoundland and Labrador wind up with what people called the highest cost of travel nurses in the entire country in terms of the contracts? We all know how it started. It started with a call to the Premier's office. It didn't start with a request for proposals. The first contracts for travel nurses came as a result of a call to the Premier's office. No openness, no transparency, no accountability.

Then I go and I think about some of the other challenges we've had with land purchases and we think about Kenmount Terrace and the great deals we've been able to execute on land where we turn around and sell Crown lands at a discount price and then, later on, turn around and buy it back for three and four and five times more than we sold it for.

We look at the cost and comparisons of other lands in that same area that were available for sale at the time of this purchase. Prices for those lots are much, much lower, but was this a request for proposals for land for development? No. This was a deal that was done without accountability, without transparency and a deal, I might add, of a perception left again by a photo opportunity that, somehow or other, this new development, this new regional hospital, this new St. Clare's would somehow or other be built on the site of the land that was being donated. Because that's all we talked about in this opportunity was 10 acres of land being donated to build a new St. Clare's.

It was only after, when it was dug a little deeper, as we investigated more, that you find out they needed to purchase significantly more acres and acres of land at a significant cost to taxpayers of this province. These are the type of deals that make people question why – why? Where is the accountability? Where's the transparency?

We've all dealt with that; we've all raised lots of questions on that whole plan. Then we go and we start and the next thing you know, we're selling land on Snow's Lane. Land that we had purchased at a price per acre, and then held, and then suddenly it was being sold for much less than we had bought it for. Much less than the public purse had bought it for.

But what's really important about Snow's Lane, there are lots of questions still to be asked. Speaker, we've been told that there are at least three times that the developer in question came to a minister in Transportation and Works to buy the property on Snow's Lane, and at least two different ministers of Transportation and Works turned it down. It was only after the third minister of Transportation got involved that this deal actually went through.

We've also been told again, was there something else happening here? Was there a direct link between the developer and some other Members opposite that had influence over this decision being made on Snow's Lane? I don't know, and that's why I'm not throwing out any names. Because I don't know. I can only tell you what's out there, but we intend to find out. I think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador really need to know what went down on Snow's Lane.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We will continue to ask the questions and continue to do the necessary things to get to this. We need to find out. People of the province deserve an answer, and we will continue to search for that.

I'd also like to take some time, of course, to talk about what's happening to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to access to health care. While we can stand in here and talk about all the great things we're doing, there are too many people being left behind. While they may be individual stories that we continue to tell,

they are individual stories that add up. They are a reflection of what's happening generally right across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. And all of us on this side of the House, and I'm sure on the opposite side of the House, have heard those stories.

Stories of people who have been denied access to timely health care. Stories of people who have left emergency departments and walked away because of wait times. People who have talked about their family members being significantly impacted because the procedures, the tests that they needed to get done weren't available on a timely basis and as a result, unfortunately, their health deteriorated, and in some cases, they're no longer with us.

We often think, and every time you hear one of those stories, you cannot help but be moved by the fact of how does this happen in a great province like Newfoundland and Labrador where we've already, in the budget, talked about the increased expenditure that we've provided to health. There's no doubt, there is increased expenditure, but then we find out, nationally, when we get the reports, that we have the worst health care system in the country. That's not my number. That's not me saying that. That's national organizations saying that.

I think there's a disconnect between what we're doing and what we think we're doing and the services that people are actually receiving. It needs to be fixed, and we intend to fix it on this side of the House, and after the next election, we will.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: There are so many stories, and they're very heartbreaking. I have one now – and I have reached out to the department about it for the last couple of weeks, and I will not share the photo, but this gentleman lost his nose to cancer, and he needs it replaced.

He's been told that it's cosmetic. He needs to go out of province, and he's been told that it's cosmetic. If I shared this photo with you – I have shared it with some in the department. This man doesn't want to go outside anymore. He went out one day and he forgot to put his mask on. A young kid was staring at him, and he had to turn away and go home.

So from a mental health perspective, from a physical health perspective, he didn't ask for this. He didn't ask to get cancer. He didn't ask to have his nose removed, but it has happened. Now he needs our health system to help him, and we put up roadblocks. Instead of finding ways of finding solutions, we put up roadblocks.

There are so many other stories. The young man in my district, with burns to his body but thank God at the time, not to his vital organs, but he needed to be transported to St. John's, to the burn unit. But he wasn't an emergency, therefore he couldn't go by air ambulance. He wasn't a medical emergency.

They waited three or four days in the hope that maybe the air ambulance would get an opportunity to come out and pick him up. They never got that opportunity. So what did they do with young man? They put him in the back of a road ambulance for nine hours, significant burns to his body, with a nurse in the back administering him morphine to deal with his pain. That is not what our health care system should be.

These are the stories of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and they're in the Northern Peninsula, they're in Labrador, they're in Marystown and Grand Bank, the Burin Peninsula, the Bonavista Peninsula, the Avalon Peninsula. They're all over Newfoundland and Labrador. But we have to find a way to do better. That's the thing and when we talk about numbers and how many people are rostered and not rostered, facts are facts. People still can't get in to see a family doctor. People are still paying

to see a nurse practitioner. I talked about that today.

For too long, there have been too many excuses about why we can't fund a nurse practitioner. We've had Health ministers who have stood up here and refused, refused the thought of allowing nurse practitioners to bill MCP. I don't care where they bill. I don't care if it's MCP or anywhere else. The bottom line is seniors of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador should not have to pay to see a nurse practitioner and we will make sure it happens.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: There are so many things that are happening right now in our province and that's what we're talking about, that was health care. I could speak, as my colleague said, on health care for another hour, for two or three, example after example after example, because everyone in this House has those examples. Then we talk about cost of living and today, even the food insecurity report that came out, that talked about the seriousness of what's happening here.

We have a Seniors' Advocate who recommended that the Seniors' Benefit should be indexed and yes, the government indexed the Seniors' Benefit, but she also recommended that a 20 per cent increase was needed to make them whole. That didn't happen. That didn't happen in this budget. It should have happened.

As I said earlier today, \$46 a year annual increase in the income support won't pay for one visit to a nurse practitioner. So no, we can do better and we ought to be doing better when it comes to helping people across the province.

We stood in this House on this side of the House when this government introduced carbon tax to Newfoundland and Labrador. We stood here and opposed it then. We

stood and opposed it when they all stood and said we vote to increase the carbon tax. We stood and opposed that increase. We opposed it, opposed it until finally the carbon tax was opposed by everyone. Then finally the carbon tax now, or at least temporarily, it's gone, which is a good thing.

Three years ago, four years ago, they stood on that side of the House proud to introduce a sugar tax – a sugar tax to modify people's behaviour. I will never get those words out of my head that were spoken that day. We are going to modify people's behaviour, and if we never collect a cent, we will know we have been successful.

That was the principles of the sugar tax implementation. That was what was going to happen. We all know what happened. A budget of \$6 million at the beginning of the year when it was first introduced quickly turned into \$9 million and has grown up to \$12 million, I think is the budget that's in these numbers right now, that obviously will have to be changed.

Are we happy that the sugar tax is gone?
Yes, we are.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Because it was a poorly designed strategy right from day one. We have said if you want to reduce the sugar consumption of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, educate them, not tax them. That's exactly what needs to happen.

We absolutely have a problem. We have a big diabetes population in our province, and we need to do more for them. My colleague from Topsail has spoken many times about the challenges in insulin pumps and everything else. That's what we have to be doing. We have to be helping people.

If we invest in some of the things that my colleague called for, we would actually save money.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We would actually save money.

But no, because I guess we talked about it, it wasn't good. But now that it's gone, now the next step is when will it actually be gone?

We have an announcement that it's gone, or it will be going. But when will people stop paying it? Maybe in the next few days or the next week we'll find out the plan. Will there be legislation introduced next week to eliminate the sugar tax? We look forward to it.

But it has to be gone – completely gone. That's what we want. We want to see that action taken, because these are things that are hurting people, and we know people are hurting in our communities because we hear it every single day. We all know about the high cost of groceries and everything else, but we have to make sure that when we do reduce taxes, like the carbon tax, how do we make sure that those savings get passed on down to the consumer, down to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? I think all of us have a responsibility to make sure that companies don't simply turn around and absorb it and we wound up having to pay. People are still, though, getting the breaks that they deserve to get.

Safer communities: We've heard lots of stories about safer communities and the need. We've heard lots of stories about the increased violent crime in our communities. People in Newfoundland and Labrador, in small parts of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, have never seen the type of crime in their communities before and they're concerned about it. So, yeah, we need to make sure.

Safer communities is not just about the crime. It's about making sure that our schools are safe to go to, that people can send their kids to school knowing that they

won't be physically abused or verbally abused, that when they send their kids to school, the programs are there, the staff are there, the resources are there to take care of the kids so that inclusive is not simply just a word, it's an action, and we can all be proud of it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Safer communities is about roads; safe roads to drive on in your communities, because a lot of people have talked about the conditions of the roads. Then we've also heard about the need for additional brush cutting. Yes, there is brush cutting being done. We acknowledge that. But we also know we need a long-term plan and a long-term vision so that we continue to take care of that.

So these are the type of things that are out there that are important that need to be addressed. But I keep saying, and I'll keep saying it now, we get elected to represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I will say that every policy decision we make should start with the first question: How will this impact the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? And let us all use that as the basis of how we make our decisions.

I will take my seat, Speaker, because I will get another opportunity later this evening.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, I'll put the question to the floor.

We will now vote on the subamendment of non-confidence.

All those in favour of the subamendment, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against the subamendment, 'nay.'

The subamendment is defeated.

On motion, subamendment defeated.

SPEAKER: We will now move into the amendment.

Back when we first discussed the amendment there, we omitted that the Member for Labrador West still had time on the clock, so we'll let him speak first. He had 11 minutes on the clock.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I guess this my last opportunity to speak to the budget and I just want to take this opportunity to thank the people of Labrador West who have elected me, put me here to speak on their behalf to bring issues from Labrador to the floor of the House and to remind them that we are a community that are facing challenges in unique ways that also needs to be looked at.

Once again, we talk about seniors' housing. We talk about housing. We talk about electricity. We talked about getting people to come up and to work, recruitment and retention, education and it's these things that are accumulated into a region that's unique like Labrador West where challenges are different. Yet, in one sense, you see all this productivity. You see these mines. You see all this economic opportunity generated, but you have so many people left behind at the same time, facing unique challenges of trying to get resources and people in place.

I had an interesting call during the break of a lady who was recruited to go up there. She's lucky enough that they found a place to live but now is facing the challenges of getting a daycare spot for their little one. She might have to turn down the job she was recruited for because now she can't find child care. Her spouse got a job in the

mining industry. They were recruited for a position up there and now they're saying, well, I can't find child care. Those are unique challenges that keep putting – we think we're a step ahead but then we ended up getting knocked back two more steps.

We continue to remind that it's a challenge for recruitment and retention, but it's uniquely challenging in places like Lab West. The reason is not that we don't have physical space for child care. It's we don't have human capacity to deliver child care. Once again, these individuals in the service industry, industries like child care, and they're having to compete with mine wages.

I always say there are more teachers working on haul trucks than there are actually teachers working in the schools in Lab West. There are more nurses out in the mines than there are nurses in the hospital because they are recruited away at \$130,000, \$140,000 a year pay wages. How can you compete with that? How do you compete with something like that?

These are the unique challenges that we face in Labrador West. These unique challenges that we have to overcome. Once again, we look to the government to help us with that, to help us move forward, because for every time you help us, we help the province's GDP. We help significantly increase the output. Then we can significantly increase the amount of money going into the province to help provide services to other parts of the province.

Every time you help us, we help you twofold, and that's why we keep saying that it's important that we try to find ways to get houses built, it's important to find ways to get recruitment and retention and it's important that we try to help out that way.

Once again, we look at the vacancy of positions. In Estimates, we talked about the vacancy of OHS officers, and they're going through a process now of trying to get these individuals hired up. I was told that one of

them was a local person, so they already have somewhere to live. At least it's a step forward. But at the end of the day, we still have other roles to fill and these have to come from people that have to move up to the community, and we have to try to find them a place to live and we have to try to find them a place to call home.

We find these unique challenges of trying to get affordable places built and try to get them to come up and fill the roles so they can help us. We have a vast amount of opportunity in other industry. I would bring up, you know, about new projects and things like that, and it's important to make sure that community benefits agreements are here to make sure this work is local, make sure that it hires local, but also manage to ensure that it doesn't use elements that could harm the community in other ways.

We want to make sure that we build these projects, they maximize the benefit to the community, and to make sure that they actually carry out and fulfill the benefits agreements and it's adhered to, and make sure that there are people there watching to make sure. Because, at the end of the day, those benefit agreements and stuff are in there and their place is to make sure that those people that are there benefit locally.

I want to make sure that these projects go off. I know that there are other opportunities. Now we have Kami coming down the pipe. The province has set out an RFP to find someone to look at the Julienne Lake deposit, which is another great opportunity. That's a very good ore body in the region. I believe it's somewhere between 25- to 30-year mine life. That could significantly increase the areas productivity, but at the same time it's also a very sought-after type of iron ore that people would be climbing over each other to get at it when it's on the market, because this is what the world is looking for right now. It's high-purity, high-grade iron ore as smelters and furnaces transition to electric arc.

This is where, once again, when these kinds of projects come forward, it's to make sure that it adheres to a benefits agreement that, one, makes sure that it's local people that get hired, and two, it maximized the benefit to the region in ways that we live there, we're adjacent and we have to make sure that we benefit to it.

It's also when we look at these projects, they do come with a negative impact. It's like a double-edged sword in the sense that prosperity and everything do come along, but you also have societal issues and stuff that also presents itself. Many times in the past with these projects, we've seen an increase in substance abuse, domestic violence. These things happen. This happened the last time we went through a big upswing, and we were caught off guard. We don't want to be caught off guard anymore.

Once again, we look to make sure that the services and stuff are available in our community; make sure that we have health care workers and mental health care workers and stuff in the community as well; make sure that we have been able to recruit and retain those individuals into the community as well. When these projects go ahead and when we see these big upturns and we see all these people coming into the community from outside, that we have the supports around to make sure that things go well and make sure that we're not caught off guard again. We were caught off guard in 2014 with a lot of these issues and housing issues and all of these things, and we want to make sure we never get caught off our guard again.

We've learned our lessons. We've taken them. We've documented it, and we know that we don't want to go down that path. That's why, in 2019, I kept saying we need to make sure we get housing built, make sure that we have low-income housing built, make sure we have seniors' housing built because these projects were slowly working their way down through the pipe that we

wanted to make sure that we had everything in place, all our i's dotted and our t's crossed to make sure that these things don't happen again.

Once again, we're asking, we make sure we get housing built, to make sure that we have the available housing for workers coming in, but also make sure we have housing available to those who have to come in to fill positions in health care and in education and government services and the service industry so that way we can make sure that we can get to where we need to be. We don't want to repeat the mistakes of the past. We want to make sure that we go forward and benefit us locally, but also, when we benefit, the province benefits twofold. Anything that we get help with, it helps twofold, and we want to make sure that we can continue to prosper, to grow and to live as a community.

I'm here, my kids are there, my grandfather was there and my dad is still there. You know, we've lived in this community for four generations, and I want to live in this community and continue to go there. Hopefully, my children can raise their families there and keep moving and growing together. I have roots there. I don't plan to go anywhere.

As of right now, me and my spouse continue to say we're not going anywhere. We have no prospect to move out of Labrador West. We have no desire to go and live anywhere else. We've got our family there. My wife's family has moved there over the years. We want to continue to make sure that our home is there for the future, for us and all those who live there.

This is why we keep saying it's important to have housing, it's important to have services, it's important to make sure that those things are available, and we can do it in a way that's responsible. At the same time, we're doing well, and anything that helps us helps the province as a whole.

We want to continue to recruit people to come to Labrador West. We want to continue to make sure that there are people interested in coming in there, and we want to make sure that it's a community that people are attracted to, to come start a family and do that. Even if they come for the short term or the long term, we want to make sure that there is a community there that is welcoming, that is available, and to make sure that it has the services available to those who need it.

As my time winds down, I, once again, want to thank the constituents of Labrador West, the people of Labrador West who've entrusted me here. But I also want to thank them for putting their trust in me, and to continue to show that it's my home. I absolutely adore it. I love it. I can't imagine another place to live other than Labrador. Once again, we talked about the ability –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The level of chatter is getting a bit too loud. I can't hear the Member speaking.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

In my closing remarks, I just want to say it's great that the House supported my PMR earlier today and I want to thank them again for that. But also, it brings me great joy knowing that people have an admiration for Labrador just as much as I do, and I want to thank everybody here.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Normally I spend a lot of time talking on my district when I get the opportunity, and I speak a lot for Labrador. I guess, Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: One second.

Order, please!

I ask the Members to keep it down a bit. It's very difficult to hear the Member speak. She's not that far away and I can hardly hear her.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Actually, I will speak to issues in my district. My constituents elected me to do that. I'm also going to speak on issues relating to Labrador because what we see for Labrador, and especially my district, is gaps.

One thing I just wanted to comment on is our leader from Stephenville - Port au Port was speaking earlier and he talked about nurse practitioners and about the lack of doctors' availability and for people to be able to access health care, and the hardship comes in with people who can't afford to pay out of pocket to see a nurse practitioner.

When you look at that, I was sitting there thinking we should be asking, why would anyone want to pay to see a nurse practitioner? The answer is right now in the province, a lot of people don't have access to health care. So therefore, if they want reliable health care, they have to pay out of pocket for a nurse practitioner.

Our leader said it's not really the point of who gets paid, whether it's MCP or some other entity that gets paid. Right now, we have people who are dying because they can't access timely health care. I know

that's happening in my district for other reasons. But the people in Newfoundland and Labrador really needs to ask – and here we are, *Budget 2025* – why are people dying of diseases that are curable? Why are people dying when they could have gotten help? It's a sad fact.

Then when you look at the cost to pay that nurse practitioner, because that's your only avenue to actually getting timely health care, we see now the times posted at emerge to be up over 20 hours. We talked about that. So it's important.

If the people of the province were listening to us debate budget, they need to be questioning, why are we bringing forward these arguments? Why are we raising these points? Ten years into a Liberal government – 10 years – with a revolving door of ministers, revolving door of premiers and there's no accountability – none. You just have to go back through *Hansard*. You just have to watch the videos of the House of Assembly to see the lack of accountability.

Also, the carbon tax was raised by our leader from Stephenville - Port au Port. In my district, the problem with the carbon tax was that we need that fuel to secure food, really. It's not about driving around. With us, the cost of food – and I raised it many times; I have my petitions here. I'm in *Hansard* speaking over and over again about the cost of food. We pay that carbon tax.

Now, what really bothers me is the environmentalist – used to be a big fan of David Suzuki. I was even ashamed to drive my truck but being a person from Labrador, you always have a need for a truck, especially when you have so many people out here, the students in need of help moving and you're driving back and forth to Labrador.

But, at the end of the day, the carbon tax in my district, when people want to go in a speedboat to hunt and gather, whether they're hunting ducks, hunting geese,

fishing, gathering berries for food, they have to go down to the gas station and the only means that they have to go out in boat or to go on snowmobile, Ski-Doo is to pump gas into that jerry can and take it down and fill up their tank.

Speaker, I'd support a carbon tax if my people, who needed to access food, had another option, an alternative way to get around. If there was an electric or renewable means for them to drive their speedboat, to drive their Ski-Doo, to be able to go around, I would support taxing because then what it is, the tax influences your choice.

The problem in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and actually in urban as well, most people don't have an option. That's the big point. We don't support pollution. We don't support global warming. We don't support any of that but, at the end of the day, when people's lives are impacted, their ability to travel, their ability to do things are impacted, yet they have no alternative, that's the problem with the carbon tax.

I wasn't going to say all that because it's cutting into my time speaking on the budget. The point I wanted to make was, when was it removed by a Liberal government? When did the Liberals remove the carbon tax? Election time – election time, election time, election time. We knew the election was coming. In the leader's debate, going to remove the carbon tax, we heard Carney.

Now, this sugar tax, Speaker, it didn't change peoples' way of consuming beverages. It didn't. If we did, there would be no tax. There would be nothing in the coffers. That's the point our leader from Stephenville - Port au Port was making. It just taxed people who wanted to have a drink that had sugar in it. There was also no tax on the chemicals for sugar substitutes that are just as harmful – none of that. At the end of the day, when was that sugar tax promised to be removed? We're going into election time.

So with the Liberals, when they remove a tax or change something, they don't do it in the height of their term. No, they will bring stuff in that is unpopular in the height of their term, or when they got a few years left. But when it comes election time, that's when they cave. That is when they actually change things.

Do you know something, that's bad government. That's a bad way to govern, Speaker, I have to say.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. EVANS: Yup, we really should be. There should be an election every year if that's the case.

Now for me with my time left, I want to focus on my district. One of the problems I run into is when I'm asking for things, you know? They're not luxury items; it's basically being able to get out to see the doctor because you might have cancer, get out to see the doctor because you've got cardiac disease or high blood pressure. There's something wrong. You need to go out and be properly diagnosed or you might have to go out for testing. You might have to go out for treatment that's already been diagnosed or you might need to get out because you've been misdiagnosed.

In my district, I'm there to ask for things to draw awareness to gaps. Things that are critical to our well-being, like access to health care. I raise it. I raise it through my petitions, I raise it in Question Period and the revolving door of ministers, they can't use that as an excuse, that they didn't hear of it, because I raise it here in the House of Assembly where they're sitting.

AN HON. MEMBER: Several times, yup.

L. EVANS: Yup, over and over again.

The access to health care, access to timely and adequate health care for my district, I'm on record every sitting of the week

sometimes and I read that petition. I remember in the fall I was reading access to health care every chance I got. I didn't always get an opportunity to stand with my petitions, but I want to thank the Member for Bonavista. He certainly helped try to get my petitions in.

Speaker, the thing with me and the problem I run into as the MHA for Torngat Mountains, is people look and say: Oh, that's costly. That's going to cost a lot of money. Look what she's asking. She's asking for everything.

The reason why that happens is because of decades of neglect for my district – decades. Decades since Confederation, we've been overlooked. It's not like we couldn't manage or look after our infrastructure. We didn't mishandle it. We didn't abuse it. Basically, it's not in repair and disrepair. We never, ever had it. Services – it's not like we neglect our services or we can't run our services, we never had them. So for me it's very, very difficult.

I want to thank the people in my district who voted for me the first time in 2019, because that is when I got elected. I remember going to the doors in the communities in my district and they were going to vote for the Liberal again. The problem I ran into at the door is they would tell me all this stuff that they talked to him about, they asked for and he never helped them with. All the things he didn't do, but yet, they were still thinking about voting for him.

All I said, because I couldn't say anything negative about him because he was my cousin –

AN HON. MEMBER: Is that a fact?

L. EVANS: Funny, not funny, yeah.

I wasn't saying anything about the Liberal Party. Do you want to know why? Because I was one of the biggest Liberals. It was like

cheer for Montreal. My mom cheers for Montreal. We all cheer for Montreal in our house. No one was allowed in the house when Montreal was playing.

In actual fact, there was one woman, a younger woman, that was one of my mom's best friends – her name was Elizabeth Nochasak. She has passed away now and she'll be in *Hansard*; I wish she could know that.

Elizabeth Nochasak was the only person allowed in our house that cheered for another team. She cheered for Boston.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: She was quite loud about it because, at the end of the day, it's our hockey teams right? We're Canadian. Someone cheers for Montreal. Somebody cheers for Toronto. My brother now is watching the playoffs; Montreal's out but he's not going to cheer for Toronto – he's not.

But, Speaker, the seriousness of this really is, I say to people now this is not a hockey game. Who you vote for cannot be like cheering for a hockey game. At the end of the day, if your team – if poor old Toronto, they used to never make the playoffs and when they got into the playoffs they couldn't advance, do you know what I mean? It was heartbreak every year. It was heartbreak every year. I have to say, Speaker, at the end of the day, it was just a bit of fun.

It was just a bit of fun that night when they got put out over and over again, poor old Toronto. It was heartbreak. My uncle is one of them. I hope they advance. I hope they win the Stanley Cup because people can have some joy since 1967. Since 1967, never won the Stanley Cup.

AN HON. MEMBER: Speak to relevance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, it's really good for us to joke and I do miss joking, I do. That's one of the things – people say what's your biggest regret being an MHA? I don't get to joke anymore. I actually have very little fun – except in in caucus, we do have fun. I have trouble sleeping, I really do. Do you know what I mean? Like that's my reality now.

It's nice to have a little bit of fun. It's nice to poke fun at the Toronto Maple Leafs, but, Speaker, at the end of the day, I say to people, with politics, you have to choose to support somebody that's going to try to do something and that will actually make the case for your needs. I'm not talking about luxury items. I refer to back one time when one of the MHAs on this side was talking about driving and the potholes were so bad he was spilling his coffee.

AN HON. MEMBER: He needs a sippy cup.

L. EVANS: Right.

AN HON. MEMBER: He had to wear a helmet.

L. EVAN: Yeah.

We don't even have the roads with pavement; we have potholes. We did have a laugh about that, but at the end of the day, I've got to say, after 10 years of inaction.

When they're over there saying nice things – we had a private Member's motion this morning about the transportation, about the air subsidy and, basically, trying to get the needs of Labrador's air transportation addressed. Speaker, on that side is the government that brought in that travel subsidy of \$15 million that's going to support tourism travel on the Island only, excluding Labrador; do you know what I mean?

That, for me, is difficult. It is difficult. Speaker, I say across and I heard really nice words. Actually, it sounded like they

thought that something should be done, some action should be taken, meet with the federal government, this and that and whatever stuff and, Speaker, do you know something? I should have smiled and been very gracious, I should have nice words; but after six years, 2019 being elected, and hearing nothing but nice words for my district and for Labrador, it's really hard to smile. It really is.

When tourists' ability to travel on the Island portion of the province is more important than residents up in Labrador trying for assisted travel, it really, really shows what this government is about. It's hard to be nice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: I said this morning when I talked about it, my subject heading to the Premier and the appropriate ministers as well, it erodes Labradorians sense of place and belonging in our province. I was kind of mad and I talked about separation. But do you want to know something? It's really, really difficult when you have a government over there that's excluding you.

I remember, in actual fact, it wasn't that long ago when every district in Labrador was red – every district. Now, for us, I hope people take away from my messaging that we need to vote in good MHAs.

The other thing that really, really upsets me, Speaker, is when people try to say on this side that we would erode people's rights, that we would cut supports for seniors, that we would take away the rights of people, that it would take away the rights of women to manage their lives, plan their pregnancies, to be able to control their lives, to be able to work, to be able to compete in a competitive work environment or stay home.

It really, really bothers me when people try to say we would erode people's rights. Because, on this side of the House,

Speaker – and I could probably even include the independents with this, is that every single person here wants to make sure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have quality of life, have ownership over their lives. Whether they're a senior and they have to choose between paying a light bill, buying food, being able to travel and visit their friends across town, whether it's a mother trying to raise her children and work in the workplace, or whether it's a person who's deciding now am I going to have my baby in the next two years or am I going to put it off for five or seven years. What's best for me and my mental health, my quality of life?

In actual fact, people know the difference, but it's really difficult when you have people in the House of Assembly saying things, the rhetoric. We're a long way away from the United States. But at the end of the day, people need to elect good people. Look at me, where am I sitting? I'm sitting on this side of the House. Who am I? Five-foot, little, old woman from Northern Labrador. Both parents are survivors – that's the word we use now, residential school. My grandmother was orphaned. At a young age, she went into residential school and couldn't speak a word of English.

But she got past that. She raised her family. One of the things that my grandmother always said was, thank God for Confederation. Because she was widowed with young children and the widowers' pension kept her family together.

So, Speaker, at the end of the day –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to get up again and represent the District of Ferryland. I thank the people for putting me in here, as I do every other time. I have a few topics I have to touch on tonight, that I'm going to try to touch on. Hopefully don't get sidetracked, but I will start with health care. That seems to be the topic, most times along the way here when we're here talking, it would be health care, cost of living. They're certainly the two big items for sure.

We've been talking about health care and what's going on in the hospitals. I've certainly spoke about it many times and so has every other Member here on this side for sure. What happens when you go in there, the delays when you go in there. We keep saying we're doing recruitment. We're getting doctors. We're trying for nurses. Seems to be an operational issue to me. Somewhere along the way it's an operational issue.

I have a letter here from a constituent that he's daughter is now in Alberta – and I'm going to read a part of it; I'm not going to read it all. She's looking to go to work as a nurse. She said: I'm writing to express my concerns about the significant delays in hiring nurses in St. John's. Despite the well-documented staffing shortages within Eastern Health, while the news is full of reports of highlighting the urgent need for health care workers, many qualified nurses who have applied for positions have been waiting for months without even receiving a call back.

I read this out before – this was sent to me. No one ever asked where's she to or we're looking for nurses. Operational – no one ever called her; no one ever asked her. Now she's gone to work. She's up in Alberta.

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

I wouldn't expect the minister is going to call her, obviously. I mean, there are people that they applied to. She hasn't received a response back. To me, that would tell you there's something wrong operationally, that she's not getting the call back. We're sitting here talking about nurses and doctors and talking about recruitment, and she hasn't gotten a call.

Now what is the problem? I mean, it's written right here. She's a Newfoundlander trained in Newfoundland, licensed in Newfoundland, even a former employee of Eastern Health. Despite her qualifications and experience, she cannot seem to get an opportunity to return home and contribute to the health care system in our province.

Eastern Health has numerous job postings, some dating back to October '24, many of which are offering signing bonuses and relocation assistance. However, the slow hiring process seems to contradict the urgency of the reported staffing crisis. If there's such a critical need for nurses, why are qualified applicants struggling to even receive a response?

That's an example. We can only tell you what we're hearing on our side. I told the gentleman – this was the dad of this girl – I would read that out in the House of Assembly. I am not using any names. I told him I would read it out because it's important for the government to hear the issue.

Now, how do we react to it? How are we going to solve it? That's just one issue that I wanted to bring forward that would be operational in the health care system.

I would talk about Opposition. Our job in here is to come in and bring issues, and we do a real good job of that bringing issues to the floor of the House of Assembly. We debate back and forth. We certainly have, lots of times, where we'll be bantering back and forth, and it does get heated no question about it. Over the last few years, I

mean, some of the stuff that we have done in here being a strong Opposition, one is the eight cents off the fuel. I think that happened two or three years ago – rolled over last year and rolled over this year. That wouldn't happen without the Opposition over here. We wouldn't leave until we got it, and we ended up getting the eight cents off if anybody can remember.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Sugar tax been in there for two or three years, probably a couple years now on sugar tax, and we've been beating on that and haven't let it go. Good Opposition is on it. We have not stopped, everybody has spoken about it, and now they're going to remove it. Hopefully it gets removed in this budget, but we'll see. That is something a good Opposition does, right there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: We had the shingles vaccine. We were doing a private Member's resolution, all of a sudden, the government is coming out just to bust the bubble on it, on the day we were doing it, they come out and they announced they're going to have it over 65, up to 70 and people that are immune compromised over 70.

Now, all of a sudden, it's going to be anyone that's 50 and over, which is great. We don't have any issue with it, but that comes from a strong Opposition pushing the subject and pushing it and pushing it and pushing until they see it makes sense what we're saying. That's what happened with the shingles vaccine, no question. I mean, we pushed it, and it makes sense, and good on the government for doing it. Good on the government for doing it, but you know what? We put up the Opposition right away, and we got that change because a strong Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: We all talk about transparency. I can just go down and name a few and I'm not going to – sometimes I don't want to do that, but this is just some of the stuff that happened in the last six years. It gets frustrating to be truthful.

We're dealing with the comfort inn, Snow's Lane, Kenmount Crossing, the Rothchild's report and the first one when I got in here – we had no idea when we first got in here – the Privacy Commissioner. That was the first one; the big one that we came in here. We had a minority government at the time, they tried to push through the second ranked person. We didn't want that to happen. They did the rating and there were four people that evaluated who they were and did interviews. We thought they should pick the first one and that's what ended up happening with the minority government, because they knew they would look bad if they voted against it and that's what happened. We made that happen with the Privacy Commissioner. That's when it started.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: I'll move on to some other stuff. I did hear the Member for Torngat Mountains this morning, it's a frustration level and we all feel it here as well. Since I started in here six years ago, we've had six Transportation and Infrastructure ministers. We're here six years and we've had six. I'm going to name them – I'm not going to say their names, I'm going to name their districts. The first one when I came in here was Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde; then it was the minister from Fogo Island - Cape Freels, a real good minister, real good person. I have to say, he was a great person. I have nothing but good to say about him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: We all have a story to tell for sure. He was such a lively – I can only remember the blizzards out in the corridor

that day, everybody can remember that day; it was such a good day.

The minister from Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: The minister from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi; the Member from Conception Bay East - Bell Island; and the minister from Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, again. I guess he didn't get finished what you started the first time so they had to bring you back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Just in the frustration part, and I see that from the Member for Torngat Mountains, I've been at this for six years and so have everybody over here, except some people have been here a bit longer. We've been trying to get some roadwork completed, some brush cutting completed, I'm going to say bridges completed, equipment for the depots. We've certainly been trying and we've been at it.

We speak to a minister; you change the minister and then, all of a sudden, we have to start all over again. I do believe the MHA for Torngat Mountains, I believe you do it to make us start all over again, because it's so frustrating.

So now when I spoke to a minister yesterday, we had a good conversation, I asked him: Who's your EA now? Did she go with you? We've got to learn that all over again and then make sure that we're getting the – I spoke with Crown Lands. The person called me this evening wondering if I did speak to the minister and if he had spoken to the new minister regarding his Crown lands application, that's the issue that's going on. That's been ongoing for months. I certainly spoke to the minister and he's been good on that subject. Now he just wants me to make sure that he's passing it on to the next minister, where it sits

because we still haven't got it solved. It's in the process of getting it solved but it's not done.

That's because we've had to change ministers. We have to go through all this work again and getting all the information and your EA numbers – your numbers haven't changed, but you know sometimes you send out a text, you're in dire need to get that information right away, we're not sure who your EA is.

B. PETTEN: The minister doesn't know which department they're in.

L. O'DRISCOLL: And I would say from the last Cabinet shuffle you had, that no –

B. PETTEN: The minister doesn't know which department they're in.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, for sure.

You know, we're not sure who your EAs are, that's certainly a big one, and our CAs are trying to call your people to get some work solved and get some stuff completed, but they have to go through the whole rigmarole to finding that out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

L. O'DRISCOLL: So the last time the Cabinet was shuffled, we haven't received from the government a full list of names from the previous shuffle now and your EAs. Now, we get them over a period of time. He got one, I'll ask that MHA there, I'll ask him if you've got a number for – who's his EA now or who's her EA. So that's important to have and, I'll just say, they did a Cabinet shuffle again, how long before we have all the numbers?

That's just something that comes up as time consuming. It's very annoying that you have to go – same thing in Health, four different ministers in Health. We have a new one

now that's started three or four days, and for some issues you have to start all over again. I met with two ministers yesterday or the day before, and same thing, I've got to start all over.

I just want to give them the story and giving you the story, personally, is what makes it happen a little faster, if there's any way to make it happen. It's just something that we've been trying to do.

I'll get back to some other good stuff going on in the district, but before I go any further, before I forget, I've got to wish my CA – tomorrow's her birthday and I have to wish her a happy birthday today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: For the record, it's the same one, yes. I will say I would be lost without her; she does a great job, I got to say, and I want to wish her happy birthday.

I will touch on cellphone coverage; everybody has brought that up. I drive up and down my district. I can start from where I drive to go to St. Shott's and how many times I lose cellphone coverage. I leave Bay Bulls, lose it in Tors Cove, pick it up in Cape Broyle, lose it on top of Calvert hill, lose it in Ferryland, pick it up again in Fermeuse, you don't get it at all in Aquaforte. You go through Renews, you lose it on the stretch going to Cappahayden, then you lose it going from Portugal Cove South to Biscay Bay, there are areas. Cellphone coverage is just so bad in my district.

You're trying to go to a meeting and you have calls that you make. How many MHAs in here are making calls while you're driving? We all do it. Everyone does it. You're driving along, you have your Bluetooth on and you're making calls. There's no one here who won't be able to shake their heads and say no, I'm not doing that, because that's happening every time you leave here. You're on the phone or you're trying to get stuff done.

But when you're driving in districts like I got and the cellphone coverage is so bad, the first thing you say when you speak to them is: I may lose you, but I'll call you when I get to another spot, or you've got to haul in. You're going to a meeting. If you have to drive an hour and a half to Trepassey, you haul in and say, well, I've got five minutes; if not, I've got to get going. If not, I'm going to be late for my meeting, and that's just the way it is.

So, you know, that should be improved. Why is it this day and age, everybody, all your kids and grandkids or whatever it is, pay \$100 each per cellphone, I would think. If you're not, you're not on a package. You're paying \$100 per cellphone, I'm paying in my household \$200 a month for two phones, and that's every household or anyone who got a cellphone. That is definitely happening, no question; definitely happening, \$100. I don't know if anyone could tell me any different. Maybe you might get it for \$70 or \$80, but it would be very unlikely you will.

You're spending \$100 per cellphone and that's one house, I'm paying \$200. Think about all the houses that are in Newfoundland and Labrador and you tell me that Bell Aliant is going to tell us, well, we're not going to put a tower here or we're going to pull out of Labrador. The money that they're making off these phones and they can't put in the infrastructure to do it. We should be pounding on their door to get this stuff done. We should be pounding on the door. It's not done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: They just pulled out of Labrador?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, they just pulled out of Labrador. Yes, they did.

I'll do Education, because I was in a class last week, as I said, but some of the classrooms that I was in last week, they had

25 or 26 students per class, which is pretty good. Next year, because the classes are combining or merging, they're going to lose one class of Grade 4s and the classes are now going to be upwards of 30.

Now who decided all that? After having three Grade 3 classes of 25; next year they're going to cut out one class of Grade 4s and they're going to merge them into two. Now I don't know the wisdom in all that or where that comes from, but it makes no sense. It makes no sense at all. But it is happening.

They have concerns. I said: Well, you're going to have to go speaking to them. You're going to have to your reps and whoever you're dealing with and the school boards. It's unbelievable, what they're doing – it's unbelievable.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, that's right.

It's happening in the school, and I would say the schools in my – well, let's go back to schools for a second. Don't want to go down that road, but go back to schools. When I first got in here, up in Mobile they had a school that was ready to be signed off, the election was called and didn't get cancelled. The Liberals came in and cancelled the school.

That have one over in Port de Grave. They got one in Labrador. They got one Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. So all that stuff went on, yes, it all went on. That school was gone. They all got the schools. Kenmount Terrace is getting one. Hopefully Paradise is going to get one, yeah.

Good they are, I'm glad for them, but it's funny they can cancel the ones in the District of Ferryland. The school is overrun in St. Bernard's. I'll tell you what the problem is. The Grade 5s and 6s that were in elementary school are moving up to the high school right now. That's where they're

located now. They have a separate section on that school. That's eventually going to be overrun. Again, it's going to happen.

But no, they all get their schools. They're all in Liberal districts, every one of them. Sad, really, it's sad. When you're looking at doing things right, that's sad – totally sad.

I will say that the summer students came out and this year we did have a bit of say in what was happening. I thank the former minister for that. We did get a say. This year we had \$70,000, I think. Everybody had – well, on this side everybody had \$70,000, I don't know about the other side.

I don't know what they gave out last year. I did put in a request, but I didn't receive it back to what they gave out last year in my district. Just wanted to be sure if somebody did get one or didn't get one or if it's recreation groups.

In my area, I had a request for \$350,000 worth of students. I'm sure that a lot of districts had the same or pretty close. Some people had more. I think one person had \$700,000. Imagine, \$700,000. Out of that \$70,000 I have 36 different organizations that we have to try to fill these student positions. Obviously, everybody didn't get a student. That just didn't happen. Me, personally, I try to take care of not-for-profits and then what happens after that. They're recreation groups, not-for-profits, whatever they're doing.

The Members' statement I did today on Goulds there that they could use a student in there as a not-for-profit to be growing vegetables and help them through the summer. Whether it be 20 hours a week that goes in and helps them. It's all a help.

I had a person last year, and I will say that the former minister, after giving out all the jobs this, lady didn't get one and she did get a summer student after. So that stuff does happen, but there is such a request out

there for summer students that it's incredible.

With federal making cuts, it makes it even harder on us here because you get bigger demands. Now, someone called me today. They didn't get any federal students; \$25,000 or \$30,000 and never had their name in to me to get any students. Now, what do I do?

I'm certainly going to go back to the minister and see if there's anything left that they'd be able to help out with this group. It's a recreation group. It's not somebody that owns a company looking for a student to go to work; these are a recreation groups that they're running softball programs during the summer with kids that go down there. It'd be after school – well, it won't be after-school programs, but they're summer programs that they go down and if it's rainy days, they're in the building doing arts. If not, they're out playing soccer or softball or doing hiking around the community.

I think she said there was 60 kids that were in that last year. So they need four or five students, and they just don't have it. I don't have it to give to them. They didn't apply so that was the rule. I am going to check it. That's some of the stuff that we're up against on the Opposition and I'm sure on the government side too. It's just not a bottomless pit, I'm sure, but we try to make the best and do the best we can for what we get handed, for sure.

Again, I'll go on to TI. I've only got two minutes left and I wanted to spend a lot more time on TI because he's my favourite minister, for sure. There's no question. In my district, I have some brush cutting that I've asked – again, I had to go back. I sent him an email yesterday with seven different projects that we're working on and one is a start on brush cutting.

AN HON. MEMBER: Seven?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes, seven now. Imagine, there a long time, too. Hopefully, we're going to get some of them solved and some of them are not too bad, but I think we could work on getting them done. Brush cutting is one. I know we had a contract this year that brush cutting was started up there. The company took the equipment and left, and I sent a few emails. They're supposed to be back this week. As of yesterday, they weren't there.

E. LOVELESS: We got to get them back.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I've been after your department to get them back. So that's what I'm waiting on, waiting to get them back there. Hopefully when they get back there, we'll get a contract for some more brush cutting in the district because there's a lot more.

I will say driving home last night, about 10:30, going through just past Big Pond, going to Middle Pond, I saw a vehicle stopped in the middle of the road, lights flashing. There was a car in front of me. They just kept on going. They slowed down, but they kept on going. When I stopped, put down the window and said, are you okay? She said: Yes, I just missed a moose.

Now, she was terrified. I said: Well, there's a car coming the other way. Leave your emergencies on but you had better move off the middle of the road. She had such a fright, she just stayed there. But brush cutting is important. In that area, it gave her a chance, and I would say when I drove home last night, the area I drove was good. No problem to see in that area but it's still dark and whatever. That's going to happen.

There's more brush cutting needed in the district and hopefully speaking to the minister, he hears me and we'll be able to get some more brush cutting. Everybody put in a list last year and hopefully we'll be able to get some more brush cutting in the district.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I now call on the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to briefly talk about – and I've done it before – the positions we all hold, all 40 of us as MHAs. What we do, I guess, the main role of us is to serve the people who have elected us, especially those in our district and as the whole province. Despite what some people outside would seem to say, it's not an easy job. At times, it can wear on you.

Some of my colleagues touched on it already, on some of the issues: not being able to sleep, thinking about this, thinking about that, and it's true. I think, at the heart of it, we're all here to serve the people. Different approaches but we should be here – and I don't have any doubt that we're not – to serve the people. MHAs, we're a last resort. The people who call us are those who have gone everywhere and cannot get the answer they're looking for or cannot get an answer, so we're the last resort.

I made a comment a little while back. The Member for Fortune Bay- Cape La Hune and the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave called me out on it. I totally understand where they were coming from, because I certainly didn't explain myself as well as I should have. We all have outstanding CAs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: We all have outstanding CAs, and I want to make that clear. But the little difference I was trying to make is – well, every one of you are ministers now, but you all have staff. You all have multiple staff under you that can do the job of either

writing letters for you or whatever. I was one of those staff at one point. But I know on our side, a district office with that one individual takes a lot, a lot of calls on a very, very wide range of issues. I don't know what we would do with our CAs, on both sides.

But it can bring you down. Every now and then, when you can find a solution and help someone, that recharges your batteries and away you go.

So when we look at the budget, it's a lot like a Christmas wish list for people out there who come to you and say I want this, I'd like to see this, I'd like to see that. Like any household, we can only afford this, or we can only afford that, but you can't have it all. At some point in time, you have to prioritize. Okay, what is it that we need the most?

When I look at this budget, and I listened to the Premier the other night talk about what they've done here, here, here and here, I started thinking of an old story I used to read on Johnny Appleseed. Johnny Appleseed was a character who went around the country spreading seeds. Here, there, wherever. Some of those seeds would take, some of those seeds would be eaten by birds and some of those seeds would grow into a fine apple tree. I look at the budget as doing that more than focusing on some of the major issues and fixing them.

The past premier talked about the budget and said this is not an aggressive budget. That was his words. It is not an aggressive budget, and in the same sentence he talked about caretaker. Now I'm not sure if he was talking about he was in the caretaker mode or the budget was in the caretaker mode, but the point being, not an aggressive budget.

We have these issues out there, and I've talked to many earlier, different things that the people want, and trying to prioritize those greater needs because you can't be everything to everyone, you can't. Very

basic, but there are some things, health care. Health care is a prime area. The Premier said it, our leader said it and Member for CBS said it. Health care is prime. If you don't have your health, what do you have? There's lots that can be done in health care.

When I look at the budget, again, there's a lot of announcements and there's a lot of reannouncements. It's a lot of some of the same stuff, the same money being forward ahead. You get the impression – you lose the confidence that is there a plan here? Is there a plan? Now yes, there may be, no, there may be – it's not evident.

You look at the Health Accord. She talked about a human resource plan for health. We haven't seen it yet – we haven't seen it yet. We hear about they've recruited so many doctors or so many nurses. We never hear the other end of the equation, how many left. But how does that fit into your plan, that you're supposed to have? We have not seen that plan.

It's the same for education. Where's the plan for education? I ask questions today. Yes, we're going to hire 400 educators and TLAs for \$20 million. Well, where are they going? How did you come up with that figure?

The new Minister of Education said earlier the week, oh, 245 of them are going to be teachers. Do the math, take the average salary of a teacher and those 245 are going to use up almost \$18 million. So out of that other two-point-so million, you're going to hire another, I think the minister said, 170 TLAs. Now I know, from PISA scores, they tell us that we're doing poorly in math here in this province, in education.

I would have to say the same about the math that's used for that \$20 million. Because you just cannot hire 240 teachers and the remainder in TLAs for \$20 million, unless they're all being hired for two or three hours here – I don't know. So we'd

like to see the plan for that. Again, it's all in the details.

Education, we have all agreed, we are looking at our most valuable resource in this province, and that is our youth. Those are the people we need to keep in school. We have an Education Accord; January of 2024 it was announced. We're going to have an accord, it'll answer all our questions. I believe the press release from the department said it would be released on New Year's Eve, or by New Year's Eve, the end of 2024.

Of course, I responded to that media at that time and said, well, I listed off eight or nine reports: the absenteeism report; the premier's report back in 2017 that said now is the time to act; teacher retention; the post-COVID report; and the reports go on and on. I know that at that point I said, what you're going to produce will be mainly a rehash of these reports that sat on shelves.

So come January, what do we see? They release a report but it's not the report. It's an interim report, which was essentially a *What We Heard* document and what reports we already had. That was essentially the content of the Education Accord report and promised, the main report we would have by the end of March. Not next March but this past March. So we're two months in now waiting on that report.

That goes back to these announcements and reannouncements. What confidence can anyone have in this government when there are announcements after reannouncements and nothing is done? IVF, promised five years ago; haven't seen it. Now it's kicked down the road for another year. We have families, young women out there who want to start families in this province and want to stay in this province and contribute to our demographics and our population.

Think of that young woman five years ago, we're getting an IVF clinic. Six years later,

nothing. Time doesn't wait for these individuals. It's a heartbreak and people have come up to me because I've advocated on it. Parents of children who want to have families and say, can you keep doing this for us? Can you keep advocating for us?

We're only one of two provinces in the country that don't have it. PEI is the other. They can drive across Confederation Bridge, which down the road is probably going to be free. It's going to free to go across that bridge.

We talk about a population growth. We've had a population growth mainly due to immigration. We don't dispute that because I guarantee you every province in this country will need or does need immigrants. But what are we doing for those at home, those who want to start a family? We should be doing all we can. What are we doing for housing for everyone who are coming in here? We need to do more there.

What are we doing about our classroom sizes and the complexities in our classrooms when you have children who are coming in who need English as a Second Language training? What are we doing? What are we doing for those professionals that come from away and bring their family? What are we doing for the family, the spouse to find work and to stay here?

Most immigrants that come to this province, at the five-year point in time, a good portion of them are no longer here – fact. They may be here this year, next year, the year after, but by the time you hit year five, a good proportion are gone. They've gone to MTV: Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. We have groups like the Association for New Canadians who do a fantastic job, and we have to build those welcoming communities, and we have to be able to provide them with the basics, no different than we need to provide our own grown Newfoundlanders

and Labradorians here with the basics as well.

We talked about food banks. I talked earlier about SOAR, the Spirit of Alex and Riley, and the food drive they did. They also do a toy drive. They collect barrels of toys every Christmas to give to those families who have nothing and nothing to look forward to.

That's where the people part comes in play. We have our different views. We have our different approaches, but we should never lose sight of what the end goal is, and that is to make our province the best for any resident, from here or away, to stay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: We have to set them up to succeed and not fail, and we have offered solutions. You know, I've talked many times about the continuous glucose monitoring devices, and how much that would save – \$100 million a year and taking the strain off our health care system.

We just learned with the shingles vaccine, a report that it would reduce dementia by 20 per cent – 20 per cent. What a cost taken off our health care system. Speaker, \$2 billion is the cost of dementia in Canada. That's huge. These are investments. These are investments that not only have a return financially, but residents of our province can live the life they want to live. Better quality of life; less chance of strokes; less chance of heart attacks; less chance of kidney failure requiring dialysis; 70 per cent less of non-traumatic amputations; and the leading cause of blindness.

If that's not a common-sense investment, they'd better change the definition of it in the dictionary, because it is so much a common-sense approach to saving some money here that they can reinvest as well as helping those who need it the most.

I do want to take the last – I've got a few minutes yet. I do want to talk about our

volunteers. You know, like I said, I mentioned Louise and Bernie Mercer and I have to say, where would we be without our volunteers? Priceless – we could not afford them. All the Lions Clubs, the Kin Clubs, the church clubs, the CLB, you name them, there are so many of them out there that do so much for our communities. We need to ensure that they get the supports they need.

I can't sit down without also speaking to something near and dear to my heart which I've advocated for, for almost 12 years now, and that's a high school and intermediate school in Paradise. Something back in 2013 when I became deputy mayor of Paradise that we were able to get in the budget. That was a previous PC budget in 2015.

We know when the Liberal government came in, it was deferred indefinitely. The high school and the other one were deferred a couple of years. We hit COVID and all that delayed it, but here we are now and able to form a parents' committee to help advocate for this, and they've been fantastic. They've been fantastic in getting the message out that we need a high school in Paradise. Government has come on board and announced the high school and, very recently, the location of the high school.

The location of the high school has caused some concern for residents of Paradise, in particular the committee. Because all along the residents were told that there would be a high school to accommodate all high school students in Paradise without negatively affecting the neighbouring high schools. That was said.

But at the announcement of the location for the high school, it was said the high school would accommodate 600 to 700 students from the previous minister. That does not cover all the high school students in Paradise. You would need a school to accommodate at least 900 students. That's what you would need.

In Estimates, I asked a question of the minister then, the past minister, and I'm waiting to get the *Hansard* back because when I brought the issue up to her in Estimates, I'm not clear on what she said. I will tell you, and this is where the clarity comes in, she said something to the effect that I may have misspoke.

I don't know if she misspoke in the media release, for 600 to 700 students, or she misspoke in the school being able to accommodate all Paradise high school students. So I'll be looking for the clarification there because that has caused a bit of angst amongst the individuals. Again, I was going to approach the – well, she's not the minister of Education anymore.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. DINN: Yes, I did not approach her because I wanted to make sure I got the written *Hansard* to be sure of what exactly was said because you may have given me the answer I wanted as opposed to the one I didn't want. So judging from the comments coming from over there across – and I don't want to misspeak – but it seems that the high school will accommodate all high school students in Paradise and not negatively affect the neighbouring high schools. I'm glad I got clarity on that tonight in my last two seconds.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I now call on the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: In honour of our friend.

J. WALL: In honour of our friend.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I appreciate that.

Speaker, it is always a pleasure to stand in this hon. House and speak on behalf of my constituents in Cape St. Francis, and at this late hour, have the opportunity to speak again today to *Budget 2025*.

Speaker, it was spoken a lot here today from my colleagues about choices, and I promised my colleague from Harbour Main I'm not going to get into a couple of verses from George Jones when it comes to that. Actually, Speaker, the Government House Leader said earlier tonight that I should follow in the footsteps of Jacob Lewis, but I don't think I will. I think I'll stay where I'm to. I enjoy the position –

AN HON. MEMBER: Do you want to start a band?

J. WALL: Start a band.

Speaker, this budget is about choices. Government did have the opportunity, did have the chance to make the choices in this budget that would make lives better, enhance the lives for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and especially at a time when we have so many people struggling. This budget contains lots when we're looking at spending, with respect to borrowing, but when you're looking at the little planning, or bold ideas to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians during this frustrating time of uncertainty.

I do know earlier today my colleague from Exploits spoke about the Dr. Hugh Twomey ER in Botwood, and that was a choice for this particular government. I listened to my colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans with respect to the Premier's office in Grand Falls-Windsor, and that was a choice of government. I listened to my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port, when he spoke about predominantly seniors paying out of pocket for the ability to see a

nurse practitioner. Again, that is a choice of government not to cover the cost of paying for nurse practitioners.

We spoke at length with respect to the shingles vaccine and how that was a choice of government. Following our PMR that we presented on that particular day, we now know of course with respect to the sugar tax – that was a choice that this government brought in at the time; I believe it was three years ago, and now we know that it's being removed. When? We don't know, but we were told that it's going to be removed. We've spoken many times over the course of this sitting of the House with respect to services being eroded in rural health care.

Now, Speaker, there are many, many areas that this budget does not address for the people of the province. I do know that my colleague for Harbour Main spoke about it several times with respect to the budget not addressing the need for more mobile mental health crisis response teams here in the province. Now I do know that *Budget 2024* did promise the new teams. It was 2024, which, a year later, are still not up and running.

When you look at choices, those are choices that this government is making. I do know, having the privilege of sitting on the All-Party Committee for Mental Health and Addictions, the importance of those mobile health crisis response teams and the difference that they would make to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on a daily basis. Again, Speaker, that was a choice.

Another choice that this government ignored – and again, my colleague from Harbour Main spoke on it earlier today – are the recommendations of the National Police Federation. The National Police Federation called for 25 more RCMP officers in our province.

Speaker, I live in an area of this province where it's serviced by the Royal

Newfoundland Constabulary, but I do know working with the Northeast Avalon Joint Council, having been a member of that and now sitting in as MHA, the great importance that RCMP members provide to the areas that they serve. I commend them for the work that they do. But when the National Police Federation calls for 25 more officers in our province and those 25 officers are not there, that does provide a gap in service and response to the people of our province. That was a choice by this government when we are looking at choices of what's in the budget and what's not.

In addition to that government failed to fill – and I stand to be corrected if any Members opposite want to correct me, but I firmly believe that government failed to fill 100 police vacancies in addition to the hiring of the 25 more RCMP officers.

Speaker, when you add all that up and you look at the difference it makes to response time, the difference that it makes to operational patrols on our highways and when you look at the effect it has on addressing crime and making our communities safer, that is huge. It is huge when you have 25 less RCMP that should be there and 100 vacancies throughout our province and, if I'm not mistaken, that is with both police forces.

It is no surprise to the people of our province, and especially to the Members of this hon. House, that the crime rate has increased over the past number of years in our beautiful province. I'm only 51 years old and I remember living home as a boy, our doors were not locked.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. WALL: Speaker, the Member opposite said I looks older than that. Well, do you know what? I remember at a time when we didn't lock our doors, when keys were left in vehicles and, again, that's not too long ago. But I can certainly tell you, Speaker, that is not the case now when people lock their car

doors, they lock their houses while they're in their homes in the daytime. Because property crime, violent crime, drug-related offences throughout our province have increased.

When you look at it, Speaker, the crime has increased and the severity of the crime has increased. We have an increase in crime, we have an increase in our population, no doubt, in our province, but the number of police officers have not increased. That is, again, a choice that was made by this government that is not in the budget that does affect the province as a whole.

Speaker, when we have communities that don't have the appropriate number of police officers, it's a simple fact, we're going to experience more crime and the residents of our province, many of whom are seniors who are feeling this – and we, collectively, I'm sure in all our districts we hear the same thing – they feel unsafe. They simply feel unsafe and that is truly unacceptable.

The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have a very extremely important role to play in our province. They certainly help protect the people of our province on a daily basis.

As I said earlier, my colleague from Harbour Main has spoken many times in this hon. House, spoken extensively with respect to debate and petitions for the need for additional officers throughout our province. I don't think anyone here in this hon. House will oppose that with respect to the need of additional officers.

Speaker, we can only look at what these brave men and women face every day. When we look at what they deal with, what they have to face, there are many factors contributing to the rise in crime in our province. Again, it comes full circle.

When we look at homelessness – and I spoke previously to this budget, yesterday, with respect to homelessness – we have

2,535 people on the wait-list for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. Out of that 2,535, we have 430 – if I can remember them correctly – who are homeless.

So if we have homelessness in our province, we have food insecurity – I spoke about that as well, Speaker, with respect to food insecurity. When we look at both of those, that leads into a deteriorating mental health and wellness of our residents.

When we look at the calls that both police forces in our province face, dealing with mental health and wellness calls, they have certainly increased. We're seeing that through both police forces and we're seeing that through our ambulatory services, our emergency response. There's definitely a connection between mental health and wellness and crime and homelessness and food insecurity. It's all related; it all comes full circle.

Speaker, we look at and we see in the media each day about the repeat offenders and the impact these repeat offenders are having on our province. As one of my colleagues said, it's like a revolving door. Again, when you look at a catch-and-release program, that affects the mental health and well-being, it affects our security in our homes, it affects how we feel safe simply in our communities.

I go back to a comment my colleague from Harbour Main made earlier with respect to drugs in our communities and in our province, and it was only last week – I believe it was May 7, a week ago today – with respect to the largest seizure of fentanyl here in our province's history. Just imagine, in our province's history, it was the largest seizure of fentanyl, that could be devastating had it got into the hands and, of course, out into the streets and to the public.

It's unbelievable when you consider what could have happened. Again,

congratulations to the police officers with respect to dealing with that. Had there been more officers, had all vacancies been filled, probably wouldn't have got to that point. We would have possibly caught more people, who knows? But it comes full circle back, Speaker, and I want to tie it back into the choices that are being made by this government and what's in this budget.

I know my colleague from Topsail - Paradise said earlier today that there are good things in this budget. We are not disputing that. There are good things in this budget. But the things that are not in this budget is how we deal with it all and how it affects the people of the province.

So, Speaker, we have many factors that impact our communities and the people of our communities. We have many people – I'm hearing about it on a regular basis – residents who are expressing anxiety about the level of crime we have, not feeling safe in their homes, and I go back to my district. Back in the fall, there was a rash of break-ins and police couldn't keep ahead of it, breaking into homes, breaking into businesses, into sheds and garages and places of employment. They just could not keep ahead of it.

I do know that there's a major strain on our police resources. I go back to being mayor of Pouch Cove, when we met regularly with the other mayors on the Northeast Avalon, and the operational patrol services, we looked for increases there. Because simple traffic stops, Speaker, make a big difference when you're dealing with crime, when you're dealing with drugs. It all comes full circle. Had we had more officers on the road, patrolling our streets, it would make a huge difference as a whole with respect to safer communities and the seizure of drugs and what have you. In addition to fines with respect to speeding and motor vehicles and what have you.

Speaker, when we look at this as a whole, the budget does not address the need for

more mobile crisis response teams. It ignored the recommendations of the National Police Federation with respect to the 25 additional officers. We are dealing with a housing crisis, again, which perpetuates crime. If someone doesn't have a place to live and they don't have a proper place to call home, it only leads to crime. We have those experiencing homelessness.

All of this in relation to the high cost of living and the declining mental health and wellness of our residents leads us to believe that we need more Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and more RCMP officers, and that does make a difference as a whole to our collective well-being here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, it was mentioned earlier today that this is Police Week, and I know I speak on behalf of all 40 members of this hon. House when we salute all police officers who each and every day risk harm to themselves to keep the public safe. As MHA for Cape St. Francis, I thank them publicly. Speaker, I have many friends within the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. I have family members in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and we all hear through the media what they face on a regular basis, the harm that they're put themselves in to keep us safe, and it does – it's very alarming when just based on the job that they have to do first and foremost, let alone if they're working with less staff than what they should have.

So if there's one thing with respect to the Premier and the Minister of Finance, as they listen to us here in His Majesty's Official Opposition, as my colleague from Conception Bay South said earlier, we bring these issues and concerns to the floor of the House, is to make the right choice when it comes to our Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, our RCMP, and have the numbers that we should have here in the province.

Both forces do an awesome, awesome job with respect to keeping the people of our province safe, to keep what we have in good order, and we just want them to feel safe in their workplace with respect to doing their job on a daily basis. So if there's one thing I wish the Premier and the Finance Minister to take away from that is for smart choices when it comes to our emergency response.

Speaker, I just want to say, because this is going to be the last opportunity I'll have to speak to the budget – and I do know that my colleague from Ferryland said earlier with respect to a change in ministers and a change in staff, that can be frustrating. No doubt, it can be frustrating, when you're looking at dealing with your constituents, the issues that they bring forward, and reaching out to the appropriate people.

It does come down to having good working relationships on both sides of this House. It comes down to having respect for Members of this hon. House. I pride myself on that, with respect to showing respect, to having good working relationships. We are here for the betterment of our constituents.

I know, as I come to work when this House is open and we're here, I do show that. I appreciate when respect is shown. But I also want to make known that when we stand in our places and we bring these concerns to this House, that respect shown here is also appreciated. I do appreciate that.

So, Speaker, I just want to say thank you for the good working relationships that I have with the ministers, and of course their staff. It goes a long way when we are helping our constituents in the best way we can.

My colleague from Topsail - Paradise said earlier we don't know what kind of calls we're going to get on a daily basis. Our CAs, God love them; we don't know where we'd be without them. We've had that conversation before, Speaker, and I want to

give a shout-out to my CA, Barb, who does a wonderful job of keeping me in line and it's a full-time job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: So I can certainly tell you that.

AN HON. MEMBER: With overtime.

J. WALL: With overtime.

Speaker, I thank you for your attention, it's always a pleasure to speak in this hon. House, and I always appreciate the attention of the Members opposite.

Thank you kindly, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. PADDOCK: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a pleasure this evening to be able to get up and speak to the budget amendment, an amendment that was brought in a month ago. If I remember correctly, that amendment was related to nurse practitioners.

So I'm going to speak this evening and highlight some issues across my district, Baie Verte - Green Bay, but also pick up some stuff since I'm, I believe, the last speaker for the PC caucus with regard to the amendment, in my role as Finance critic as well.

Let me start first on the point of nurse practitioners. Speaker, we are in a health care crisis. There's a model out there and that model of leveraging nurse practitioners is proven. It's proven across Northern Canada, other jurisdictions. If we look at where our numbers are going, they're continuing to get worse. I think we only have to go out and engage the citizens across our individual districts and they will tell those

stories. In fact, we've been bringing those stories to the floor of the House of Assembly, especially during Question Period.

What can we do with nurse practitioners? Well, the Leader of the Official Opposition talked about providing them the capacity to bill MCP. We need to be able to take pressure off the system. In my area, as I highlighted earlier today, if we were leveraging nurse practitioners, we would take pressure off Baie Verte - Springdale, which in turn would take considerable pressure off Central Newfoundland, the hospital in Grand Falls-Windsor and then, by default, across the entire health care system in the province.

Then I would also say, we need to look at how we grow the inventory of nurse practitioners within the province. We have a number of nursing students that want to go that route. They want a career here in Newfoundland and Labrador. They're not looking to go to Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver, Newfoundland being just a pitstop. No, they want a career here in Newfoundland and Labrador in the health field. I think it behooves government to set the conditions to help them achieve that. Then, in so doing, we would take considerable pressure off the entire health care system in the province.

Now, the current government has no intent, it seems, in doing that, but when we form government, that will be done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: The next point I'd like to talk about is the \$200 million in contingency. We're now a month and a half into the fiscal year and still no plan, still no idea of how that contingency is going to be used or if it's going to be used.

Let me highlight a couple of things with that contingency. What was highlighted, I guess, a month ago, was that it was for addressing

impacts on businesses related to tariffs. Let me highlight a couple of examples. We've had some of our fishing industry, particularly shrimp – shrimp has faced significant tariffs from China. What level of support are we looking to provide to them?

We've also had a number of businesses – anybody that's tied to the auto sector, and I'll give you a case in point. There's a plant in Point Leamington, in Exploits, and then there's a plant in my district as well in Springdale: Superior Glove. Superior Glove had to pull back staffing to address the pullback that's happening in the auto sector. That is tariff related. Is there going to be any support there for them?

These are legitimate questions. If you say you have a contingency fund related to tariffs, then please, give some indication of how that's going to be used across the businesses here in the province. If you're not, then sobeit.

From my accounting, I would expect now, based on what the Premier has highlighted in the past couple of days, that we're going to need about \$20 million of that contingency right now. One, to address the elimination of the sugar tax – that's a smart move – and the other \$4.5 million to address shingles vaccine for those over 50. My numbers there is approximate based on what the Province of Nova Scotia is incurring.

Again, it would be useful, in the name of transparency, to provide some clarity of how that funding for those two line items, sugar tax and the shingles vaccine, is going to be executed within the budget.

I'd like to speak about a percolating issue within my district. That is the school, and I'm very thankful for that school. That's in Pilley's Island: Dorset Collegiate. That's the redevelopment of Dorset Collegiate. That's going to collapse, essentially, the school in Robert's Arm, the junior school, and the same with the junior school in Triton. So it's

going to be a K to 12 for all of Green Bay South, in Pilley's Island.

The issue there, and as the Town of Pilley's Island has sent to the Minister of Transportation and Works and to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, we now have a water supply issue in the Town of Pilley's Island. So it behooves now government to ensure that the baseline infrastructure is there – meaning from water and sewer – to be able to support that redevelopment of that school. It's a good plan, the redevelopment, but we must ensure that the water supply is adequate for it.

Now, over the next few minutes I'll quickly highlight some of the business, commercial and industry-related interests across my district, and some economic driver impacts on them. So first let's talk about three of our mega-renewable projects. Fishing: So fishing in my area, we've got both fish harvesters, plant workers; we also have aquaculture.

A key concern in my area – and which should be for the entire province, because this is an opportunity to mitigate our end-year deficit – is the lack of a mackerel fishery. There's absolutely no reason to not have a mackerel fishery. So I would encourage the new Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture to engage with their federal counterpart, who's a Newfoundlander as well, to ensure that we can get a mackerel fishery in place.

The second point is with regard to northern cod. The northern cod, as we've seen for the cod showing up in crab pots along both 3K and 3L, northern cod is back in significant numbers, and we need an allocation of that for our inshore fishery. That's again an opportunity for that fishery to help mitigate the financial impact on the province. So I would again encourage the minister to be writing her federal counterpart for that.

Now, when we talk about fishery, there's one thing this time of year that a number of people start to consider and that is the food fishery and the dates for it. A number of Newfoundlanders that live away, I say they're Newfoundlanders even though they're living in another province because for them they will always be Newfoundlanders, they look to book their vacation based on the dates of that food fishery.

Again, every year we're in this time frame of when the dates are going to be announced. We need to do what is right for our tourism industry. We need to do what is right for our residents to ensure that the food fishery is there and is both fair and equitable for Newfoundland and Labrador compared to the rest of Atlantic Canada.

Forestry in my district is significant with a lot of operations supporting Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, smaller sawmills and some small sawmill operations supporting lumber activities. I have one sawmill in my district that's looking for a small increase. The reason they are looking for that small increase is to support the mining industry. If they are unable to do that, then the mine down on the Baie Verte Peninsula is going to have to import that from outside the province. Does that make sense? Does that really make sense? We have an opportunity here to expand rural Newfoundland labour. We have an opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas. We have an opportunity to increase revenue to the province in two capacities: fee from timber and also with regards to both corporate revenue through their expansion.

Let's do what is right. This reduced the cost impact on that mine and will also expand rural economic development.

Agriculture in my area, now, we're starting to see the expansion of hydroponics. I think that's an opportunity for the entire province to get behind because it's an opportunity to lower and expand food production in the

province but also lower the cost of food stuff for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The one thing that we keep coming back to in agriculture, in my area and really across all of Central Newfoundland, is the opportunity to have a federally regulated slaughterhouse. Now my colleague from Exploits put a press release out on that and went into detail about the need and the impact of doing it, so why government won't do it simply makes no sense. We have an opportunity to take control of our destiny with regard to food production and lower the meat cost on many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Tourism is a potential renewable megaproject in my area as well. As I highlighted this afternoon, one of the impacts with that is roads. We need a five-year road plan. Last May, there was a promise: two kilometres in Rattling Brook, 3.5 in Coachman's Cove, two kilometres in Harry's Harbour. Probably the former minister of Transportation and Infrastructure can remember helping to make those promises. It would be nice if they were actually honoured.

I'll come now to one that's not a renewable megaproject but it's on the verge of being a massive megaproject in all of Central Newfoundland and Labrador and that is mining. Again, with mining we have the challenge of roads. I know in my area, the Town of Baie Verte, Ming's Bight, King's Point, Springdale have sent letters specifically asking what they need in the short term to be able to expedite on those mining opportunities.

As we expand the mining in my area, but across Central Newfoundland and Labrador, there are two intersections that are of significant risk and I've highlighted those to Transportation and Infrastructure. Those two intersections are the intersection at 390, I've sent multiple emails and the last email I sent, I went and pulled the stats from the RCMP going back three years. That would

shock you. Now those stats and stuff I'll probably bring to the floor of the House very soon. We have to do what is right for the residents there. The communities are asking for it, the residents are asking for it, the first responders are asking for it, at a minimum reduce the speed.

Then down at the intersection of 410, 414, Baie Verte Highway going to La Scie, a significant right-hand turn with the increase in ore traffic, it is an accident waiting to happen. All we're asking for is a little bit of lighting and a little bit of guardrail. Let's do what is right for those residents.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: I'm going to keep on track of all of these intersections over the next while and I pray to God that there is no accident.

Now to close, I'd like to close on my role as Finance critic. As Finance critic, we're back and forth on data and how we view where we are with regards to financial health. The Fraser Institute ranked the Newfoundland and Labrador government last based on three factors: government spending, taxes, debt and deficits. They used a quantitative process. Newfoundland and Labrador, under this Liberal government, ranked last overall, last in taxes and second last in deficits and debt.

I know the Minister of Finance is using other statistics, but I'll come back to what I think is the most important one to close off here tonight. That is from the Auditor General of this province. These are not my words. These are her words and let me read it into the record here tonight: "**Financial Health of the Province**. There is no single indicator which provides a complete picture of financial health. Net debt is a key indicator of sustainability." This is going back to last year. "As part of Budget 2024, government announced borrowing requirements for the 2024-25 fiscal year would be another \$2.8 billion," – and some of you say, yes, that's billion with a B – "for

a net debt level of almost \$18 billion. It appears government is again planning to spend beyond its current means, relying on borrowing to fund provincial services."

This current year, as we know, the loan demand that they're looking at is \$4.1 billion and it actually could be higher depending on how we properly or if we properly account for that tackle sediment funding.

This is, again, from the Office of the Auditor General: "If the net debt grows faster than the population or the economy, it could signal future challenges in repaying debt. The province should consider the various indicators of financial health and potential risks when planning its current capital spending." Clearly that is not the case, if we are borrowing now \$4.1 billion.

"The province should also plan to be come less exposed to the increased cost of borrowing through conscious strategies to reduce its debt." Folks, this was from the Auditor General.

So, as we close here tonight, I want to leave you with the four tenets of good governance. Those four tenets of good governance are: transparency – that was highlighted tonight by the MHA for Stephenville - Port au Port; accountability – and that was highlighted across a number of MHAs over the past few days, and I believe the MHA for Mount Pearl - Southlands gave an extensive list with regard to a lack of accountability; openness – I think I'll come back to the example that was highlighted by the MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans. Rushing for a photo op and then not being there to fund an ongoing demand for the province with the Lionel Kelland Hospice. The last one, effectiveness, and I challenge the stats –

SPEAKER: The Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, we will now vote on the non-confidence amendment.

All those in favour of the non-confidence amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

SPEAKER: Defeated.

On motion, amendment defeated.

SPEAKER: We will now move into the main motion.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This is my first opportunity to speak on the main motion – my only opportunity. Speaker, I spoke earlier on the amendments relating to the budget, and it's really, really important for us to realize what's being debated. It's about finances for services. Finances for infrastructure across the province. It's about monies being made available for our seniors. It's about monies being made available for our children, access to education, all of those things.

Speaker, in my district, because as the MHA of Torngat Mountains I have to speak on the budget for my district, since I got elected in 2019, I've been raising many issues regarding the lack of access to services. In 2019, my focus was on the freight boat. The boat that actually came from Lewisporte, the Speaker's district, brought a lot of materials, a lot of food from the Island up into Northern Labrador into my communities. This was an economic way to move food.

Now, Speaker, when I raised the issue of this Liberal government –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's getting difficult to hear the Member speaking, please.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Speaker, when I first got elected in 2019, one of the things my constituents wanted to do was talk about and try to get the freight boat from the port of Lewisporte put back on. When I talked about the access to that service, the marine shipping service from Lewisporte up into my district, I talked a lot about access to food and food insecurity.

Also, it wasn't only about access to food and food security. It was about building materials. Since 2019, we've seen a huge increase in the cost of building new houses and repairing houses, and we suffer the consequences of that. Because, in actual fact, it wasn't like we had adequate housing, Speaker. It wasn't like we had access to adequate housing or that we were able to put our houses in good repair. In actual fact, we were struggling back then because we didn't actually have access to a lot of the services and infrastructure.

Now, one of the things that I did raise when I talked about food insecurity and the removal of that freight boat, I talked about the cost of getting the food up into the stores. What a lot of the residents do, Speaker, is they used to order food from your district, from the Co-op in Lewisporte. They used to order bulk food shipments, and they also ordered from Atlantic Wholesalers in – what is the minister of now?

AN HON. MEMBER: Who?

L. EVANS: Crocker. Sorry, Speaker, with the revolving door of the ministers, I can't –

AN HON. MEMBER: Industry, Energy and Technology.

L. EVANS: Industry, Energy and Technology. Back when I got elected, I think for a while there it was minister of Transportation, but in terms of hats, you have many, many hats, Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shuffling the deck.

L. EVANS: Shuffling the deck.

Access to services, access to food, access to building materials, access to speed boats – in actual fact, back in, I think it was 2019, when they removed the freight boat, we had trouble getting a lot of supplies up to the North Coast. I had a constituent who actually purchased a boat and trailer on the Island. I think it might have been in your district, Speaker, Lewisporte. It was a brand new Coastal Vokey, with trailer and the engine. We're looking at \$60,000 probably for a Coastal Vokey, brand new trailer, and I think it was probably 150 outboard on her, so about \$60,000.

This young man had been working and saving for a couple of years. He was working in Voisey's, and this was his dream boat. Now, he had planned to order the boat and have them drop it off to the ferry in Lewisporte and be put on the ferry on freight boat and brought up to my district. But it was going to cost probably about another \$5,000 to get that boat from Lewisporte region up into my district.

What they did is they drove down and they actually bought a pickup truck, a used pickup truck, picked up the boat and trailer, drove it back up and then they sold the second-hand pickup truck. That was a really good way of being able to get that boat and motor up into my district.

Speaker, not everybody can do that – not everybody can do that. Now, what's happening is we are forced to deal with the businesses in Goose Bay. What have we witnessed over the last six years? Gouging. We witnessed the cost of food go up in the stores in Goose Bay and supplies in Goose Bay. We witnessed the cost of speed boats, engines, Ski-Doos, everything go up.

Also, another thing, when you purchase a snowmobile, if you bought it through Lewisporte, if you bought it down around Corner Brook or if you bought it anywhere on the Island from a dealer, they would throw in things. They would throw in the box, probably the axe, extra belts. All these accessories that go with the snowmobile. You could actually get accessories thrown in. In Goose Bay, you don't get that. In actual fact, it costs more.

I remember when he was minister of Transportation at the time – he is Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes, IET.

L. EVANS: Yes.

I remember him being scammed, and he went out and he said to the press – and I'm paraphrasing now – in actual fact, getting something shipped from Goose Bay to the North Coast, the cost has gone down. I think if you were going to get a snowmobile shipped from Goose Bay to the Coast, it was going to be a cost about \$40 cheaper, I think. We'd have to go back and check exactly what he said.

So I went out to the media and on behalf of the constituents in my district I said yes, when you purchase a new snowmobile in Goose Bay and you get it shipped to the Coast, you may save \$40. But if you bought it down in Lewisporte, or on the Avalon Peninsula, you'd save a minimum of \$5,000, and you'd get the accessories, extra things. So really, where's the deal? It's lost.

Now, Speaker, people may say, well, Lela, you know they removed that boat, all of Labrador lost that boat. But at the end of the day, I was told by the minister of Transportation at the time, the deputy minister of Labrador Affairs at the time, in a meeting – I think it was on the eighth floor, I'm not quite sure, in the boardroom – I was told the reason why the marine freight service from the Island to my district was taken off was because the Trans-Labrador Highway was nearing completion. That's the reason I was given. That was the valid reason. How many times did I say that? I said that here in the House of Assembly many times. But this is budget talk; this is about how you spend the money.

I was told that. Do you want to know what the problem with that reason is? And I said it – and do you know something? I was being kind of saucy when I said it. The first thing I said was, oh, that's the reason why. But the problem with that reason is, when I look out, when I go down to North West River, the closest community to my district, and I look out towards Postville, the community of Postville, and I look out towards the community of Rigolet, I don't see no Trans-Labrador Highway – I don't see no Trans-Labrador Highway.

So how can you say the reason why that freight service was taken off, and then a little bit later, I think it was in the spring when the minister of Labrador and Indigenous Affairs I think at the time was talking about the Trans-Labrador Highway was nearing completion, we were going to be paving the last so many kilometres. Now that was dragged on a couple of years, actually. But the Trans-Labrador Highway was nearing completion.

That sent a strong message to me and the people in my district, from a minister that's a resident of Labrador saying the Trans-Labrador Highway was being completed. It's not completed unless our communities are connected, or were we never going to get

the option of getting those communities connected?

Now, for me, the problem with that was we didn't get the benefit of the Trans-Labrador Highway. They took off the freight boat. So we had hardship. We saw the price of our food go up. We saw the price of our construction materials go up. We saw the price of our household goods up. In actual fact, for repairing our houses, getting things in like a washer, a dryer, a hot water tank, things you take for granted, all of those things became harder for us.

Are those luxury items? Having a hot water tank in your house, is that a luxury item? If you have four young kids, is a washing machine a luxury? No, it's not.

The problem for us, Speaker, is our quality of life went down in our communities. Our cost of living went up artificially because that wasn't about inflation, that was about this Liberal government taking off a vital service for the residents in my district. That's when I first got elected in 2019. I got easily elected in the next election. What was it, 87 per cent, 89 per cent of the vote? Now, mind you, we only had I think it was 400 people could actually get their ballots mailed, received their ballots in the mail and sent back.

That's another thing, access to Canada Post, the postal service. But, Speaker, at the end of the day this is about this government taking away services for Northern Labrador. Yet, we can talk about reconciliation. The first premier that was sitting across from me in 2019, the Liberal premier that was a part of the government that took away this service, always was very open to talk about services to Indigenous people, about how important it was to include Indigenous people when it came to the Liberal government.

The next premier that got elected, same Liberal government, the last 10 years, talked about the same thing. Oh, he even

went further than that. We're going to put paintings up in the Confederation Building. Now, I was there for most of them when I could get out from my district. It was very, very important for me to be there to acknowledge the value of Indigenous artwork and about documenting and putting up there in beautiful artwork, very creative, about the culture and the history. Because you tell stories by artwork. You tell stories through carving. You preserve your history and your traditions and a lot of your knowledge goes into artwork and carvings.

I'm not against that, but I said in this House of Assembly many times, you can't eat it when you're hungry. You can't feed it to your children when they've got to go to school hungry. You can't heat your house with it when your grandmother is there in the house with you, your mother, your elderly father is there in the house with you.

Now, speaking of can't heat your house with artwork, the price of fuel, stove oil is so expensive. The price of electricity is so expensive. My petitions say that. Every minister, every government Member over there has heard about the price of electricity in my district, about the price of oil, over \$1,000 more to fill up your tank.

Can you heat your house with artwork or carvings or beautiful things, statues out there in the Confederation Building? No, you can't but I tell you, I've been told about families who went down to the clothes donations and filled up garbage bags of clothes and brought home to their house and put that in the stove to try to heat their house. I have heard of families burning things. Do you know what I mean? Burning things to try to heat their house.

I thought we had moved past that. I thought we had moved on but, recently, when the cost of oil went through the roof and it cost \$1,000 more to fill up your tank outside your house, that little 1,000-litre tank over by your house, than on the Avalon, over \$1,000 more – it's about \$2,000 to fill up

that tank and that may last a month or it may last two weeks in the coldest months of the winter.

Where does that money come from if you don't have it? It doesn't mean you can borrow the money, because some people can't borrow money, Speaker. People can't afford to pay it back. So how do you heat your house? You partially heat your house. You heat your house when the kids are home. At night, the furnace is turned off. In the morning, you might heat it again or if you're lucky enough that you've got somebody who's got a snowmobile and you can haul wood, you might be able to have some wood to burn.

Speaker, these are very important things for me. These are issues. It's about erosion of services. It's about basically not helping be able to actually keep your house warm.

I have constituents messaging where they have to move out of their house in Nain, but they have nowhere to go. We still have the problems with repairs to the Newfoundland and Labrador houses because there's been no real comprehensive plan developed and implemented that I've been asking for, for six years.

I'm trying not to give them a hard time because they are acknowledging it's a problem that houses are sitting vacant in Nain, and now we have people who have overcrowding, are couch surfing, homelessness. We have people who are in situations that make them very vulnerable, but at the end of the day, Speaker, for me, I can stand up here and talk about anything and then compare it to my district.

I remember – I think I may have mentioned this – I was on the radio one time being interviewed, and it sounds saucy. In this case, I wasn't trying to be saucy. I said, pick a topic, pick anything. Pick any kind of service, any kind of support, anything about households or communities, pick

something, and I'll show you that there's inequity and inequality built in for my district.

For me, it's really, really difficult because of the situations I deal with. When I deal with vulnerable children, I deal with vulnerable women and I deal with vulnerable elders. What makes them so vulnerable? Access to somewhere to live, somewhere that's warm; access to food, access to clothing. These are the things we take for granted, and you'd think we would be past that when it comes to budget items, but, Speaker, at the end of the day, that's why I'm here with my petitions.

I actually got, I think it's seven new petitions, but I haven't introduced them. I may next week, but at the end of the day, I like going back and saying, where's our access to adequate health care? Where's our access to mental health? Where's our access to housing? Where's our access to be able to heat our houses? That's the focus right now because at the end of the day, if you don't have your health, what do you have?

I'll pick something now, hold on. Let's just talk about the intergenerational trauma, and we'll talk about domestic violence. We'll talk about addictions. We'll talk about vulnerable populations. Because do you want to know something? They're all tied together.

This morning, we did have the moosehide campaign. I realized I changed my jacket, changed my shirt because I didn't want to be on TV three different times talking about the same thing with same shirt on, so I changed my shirt.

When I clip it and post it, it could be next couple of days. But the moosehide campaign, talk about incarceration, we talk about abuse. We talk about not living up to services that should be provided for people. The failures of this. I've actually got one of these in my truck. I've got one of these in my house. I could rhyme them off.

But at the end of the day, Speaker, inaction. Beautiful words, but inaction. That's what this Liberal government means to me.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to stand on the last speech for me for the budget. A lot of times, and I've been around long enough with the budget, it do get a bit feisty sometimes. It do. I've been Opposition also and we've got different ideas than what should be done, and it's very hard to do everything for everybody no matter who's in government, I can assure you of that.

A lot of the times when you're in the Opposition, you've got new ideas, you've got new rationale for how you do things, and sometimes then when you get in government, it's not practical, so no matter who's in government, it's difficult, I can assure you of that. In Opposition, this is where we come up with the new ideas, and this is what democracy is all about. This is democracy, to be able to stand up and pass on your ideas that you hear from your constituents and do it in a way that some ideas are good, some can be implemented and some can't.

So I'm going to go through the biggest concerns that I hear out in the District of Humber - Bay of Islands, Corner Brook, and Western Newfoundland: health care. Health care is the number one issue, health care by far. I can, right now, on my phone itself, give 20 examples of the emergency department in Corner Brook. A lot of the information that you can pass on to people is never passed out to give them so people can ease their mind. I'll give you a good example, is the radiation.

Like, if every two or three months they'd be given update if there's anything new with the radiation oncologist, so if there's anybody coming or if there's anybody here that we can recruit or anybody, but there is just silence. When there's silence, people just start thinking there's nothing being done. I understand and I know the cancer care team in Corner Brook. I know they're working hard. I know they're working very, very hard but if you don't pass on the information, from a political side, everybody's mind starts thinking very differently.

They start thinking that no one is doing anything, when actually they are people working hard at it. When you become government, you don't want to stand up and walk into a crowd or walk into the media and give an update when there's really no update to give, but you don't realize you're giving assurances to people that you are working on it. When you are working on it, people say, okay, they're trying. People are trying, there's some hope. When you just shut down the people, just shut it down and you don't want to go out and give any update, even if it's not that positive, at least you could give them the assurances that you are working on it, because the staff are working on it and the staff can't speak like politicians can. I know the Minister of Health is well aware of that.

I know people who make announcements, you have to make the announcements, not the staff. That's the same way it should be with health care. You can't ask the staff who are working hard, who are doing their best, they can't go out and make the announcements. So a lot of the times in government when you don't give information, you lose a lot of credibility and it's better to let people know upfront.

The second thing is the PET scanner. I understand that there is money now, going to go out and buy a PET scanner, money put forward, but we should start planning now to look for people to run the PET

scanner. We should start now. It's going to take, I would say, three years to get it accredited and we need to start now.

I really feel that was one of the problems with the radiation unit and the radiation oncologist, we never started recruiting back when we should of in 2020-2021. I understand that there's a global demand for radiation oncologists, I understand that, but we should have started recruiting.

Here's an example now with the PET scanner that we should start recruiting now. In two to three years time, hopefully we'll have somebody or have someone beforehand that we can have the PET scanner up and running in Corner Brook. But when you don't give updates to people and when you don't want to explain that we haven't got one but we're working hard and here's the steps we're doing, it does show people that politicians are engaged.

I urge the government and I urge the new Minister of Health to do that. Send out and have a media scrum and explain what the department is doing. Because I can assure you if you go out in the streets in Corner Brook and if you ask what the politicians are doing, the minister is doing to get a radiation oncologist, they'll say nothing – nothing. They forgot us. That's what they'll say. Trust me on that.

I'm trying to help the government here, because if I'm helping the government in such a way that you're going to give positive information to the people who are at least going to have their minds relieved saying that they are working on it, it's going to help. It will help people. It would bring a better light to the people who are in charge.

But just by staying in St. John's and not saying anything about any issue whatsoever when you have the opportunity to meet the people, meet the council and explain with the media that we are working on it, it's just not happening – it's just not happening. I'd love to see updates on the health care, but

we just don't get them. For some reason is that if you can't say something that you knew 100 per cent that you're going to get done that's going to get good media attention, you won't saying anything. It's wrong.

I remember Clyde Wells had a meeting with a bunch of fishermen and Clyde Wells was going to get a good roasting. He was going to get it. We had the Lions Club in Curling. He walked in and by the time he finished people said, my God, we never got anything but what a man to stand up for hours and take our questions and work on it. And walk out and shake his hand and just say, well, Mr. Wells, why would you stand and take it? He said: Because you voted me in. I'm your representative. You just can't come in good times; you have to come in bad times also. I always remember that meeting. I remember the meeting.

This is so true. I remember going to public meetings. I remember one in Irishtown-Summerside when they were amalgamating the two towns and Joe Loder – good friend of mine – he was the mayor, wanted me to do something. I said not a chance, wouldn't do it. I was young then and I went to the meeting, I went over, 250 people. What they wanted me to do was they built a fake casket, wanted me to get in the casket because it was the death of their community. I was going to be eaten alive.

But I guarantee you one thing, when I sat down with all the people and at least took all the questions and all the answers, everybody respected me. They might not have agreed with what I said, but respected you.

So this is something for governments to learn. You should learn that. If you're going to be the government, you have to govern. You're leaders. If you don't give regular updates, people are just going to say well, they don't care about our area. They don't care about people in the West Coast. I can

assure you that is the sentiment. That is the sentiment on the West Coast.

I look at the long-term care beds – and everybody knows that I was over with the Liberals; I'm independent now. But everybody who I dealt with on the Liberal side can say that I dealt with them honestly and fairly. There is no one over there that I actually ever made a deal with or worked with that they came back and said, b'y, Eddie Joyce wasn't honest on that. No one – absolutely no one.

So this is why it concerns me. When the hospital was going to be open, I went to two or three ministers and people, and said, you're going to have a problem with acute-care beds. You're going to have a problem. And they did have the problem.

I wasn't trying to be political because of people's health; I was trying to help the people who were coming from the long-term care, who were in acute-care beds at Western Memorial Regional Hospital, to come over. I was actually warning people on this. I was pleading with them, let's do something, because it was in –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask Members to lower the volume of conversations, it's hard to hear the Member speak.

E. JOYCE: That's just Members saying I agree with you, what you're saying is right.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: I thank people for that.

But that's the kind of things – and I can look at ministers now that I dealt with, and we got positive things done. A lot of times when you come quietly to say here's an issue that we should resolve because it's going to become major, I'm doing it on the behalf of

people. I don't need no headlines; I don't need no media attention. But I want results. This was another one, with the long-term care beds. We all knew that that was going to be an incident and crisis. We knew it. Government were told. A year or a year and a half before, government were told, but look what happened.

Now the problem with that, the problem with not listening and not dealing with the problem upfront, is that now we've got the lineups out in the emergency departments. People who should go up in the acute-care beds can't get up there because there are long-term care patients. That's the end result of not working with other Members, and also looking at issues that can come up in the future. It's causing major concerns.

Does anybody ever speak to the doctors and nurses out there? It's a major concern, and just the sequence of that is that they're going to build 45 beds in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital and you can't get an update. You actually can't get an update. There are 45 beds supposed to be four months ago, three months ago, it was supposed to be starting construction but there's no regular updates to give people the assurance that things are moving along.

It's not hard for the minister or the Member for Corner Brook or the Member for St. George's - Humber to go out and give an update on it. You give an update so at least then people say this is moving along and they can say, yes, government are working on this. They can say we go to emergency now, we might be able to get an acute-care bed if we need be.

I'm trying to give government a bit of advice here, because the advice that I'm giving you will help a lot of people. It will help a lot of people. I don't want to be involved with it, not one bit. Don't want to be, do not want to be in the spotlight on it and take credit for it, I just want it done, and it's easy to do. I know the government knows it's easy to do but someone has to have the courage to

start doing it. You have to have the courage to realize, even though you haven't got great news and positive news, people will respect you if you give them the news and keep them informed. People will respect that, and that's what I've been saying to government ever since 2019.

I know there are ministers over there know that you can call me and say, can you do this? I said not a problem. If it's going to help people out, count me in. I've done it on numerous occasions. I know there are a lot of ministers came out and I know the minister for Housing, he came out and sat down with the town council of York Harbour-Lark Harbour, it was a great meeting.

When I extend an olive branch and say if you want to come out and find out for sure what's happening in your department in the Corner Brook, in the Bay of Islands area, I'll bring you around. I would actually bring you around, set everything up for you, so you can get informed of what's happening.

I've been around probably a bit too long, but this idea of us and them, don't work. Us and them don't work. It's all right to banter here in this House of Assembly because we have different ideas. I'll give you a good example. Kevin O'Brien used to be the Member for Gander, minister of Municipal Affairs from Gander. Kevin O'Brien was putting a fire truck into Cox's Cove.

Now, I had Kevin O'Brien hounded to get the fire truck. Kevin O'Brien was putting in the fire truck. Kevin O'Brien sent out a memo to me. He said: Eddie, we're having a fire truck this Saturday. I wrote him back, I said, Kevin, b'y, I can't make it. I'll be away and plane is already booked. I'm gone for about two weeks. He said: When are you back? I told him and he said the memo is going out in one hour, that's the day we're having the fire truck.

Kevin O'Brien came out, and me and Kevin O'Brien went and delivered the fire truck to Cox's Cove. He didn't have to do that, but

that's the kind of things – and I know some of the PC Members when I happened to be minister for 2½, three years, I used to call them up to the office. Might be down here, might be shouting and going at each other, come up the office. Okay, here's the Municipal Affairs money you got; here's what's ranked. What do you want to put? And after the first time, they realized, that's the way you operate.

You tell me where you want it, everyone's ranked, and they pick up the phone and start phoning mayors. Now we might get down to the House and people get the idea we dislike each other. We never did – never did.

That's what's lost in this House of Assembly. That's what's lost is being able to sit down and work with each other. Put our differences aside, put the red colours aside, put the blue colours aside, get things done, but you have to have debate and exchanges here in this House of Assembly. That's one thing that has been missing in this House of Assembly.

I know a lot of times that what happens if we don't get along, if we don't trust each other to do some things for each others' districts, what happens? It becomes so much friction, and who loses? Our constituents. That is who loses. I can assure you, on many occasions, we don't realize because we're bantering back and forth, and we're going back and forth on issues to each other, but we can't get together to work out a lot of issues, and it's the people who we represent suffer.

I go again to the Minister of Health and others. Three years ago, there was an announcement of the Family Care Team in Corner Brook. Not done – not done. There's no Family Care Team in Corner Brook. So I say to the minister, if there's going to be no Family Care Team, come out and have a meeting and say why we can't have a Family Care Team. Come out and say we

can't find the expert people, can't find the doctors, we haven't got enough personnel.

If we do that, people would understand that you're still working on it, but the idea, every time you hear about the Family Care Team, it's just non-existent. It's better to inform people about why there's no Family Care Team rather than run and hide because there's no Family Care Team. That is an issue out in Corner Brook.

I know, and I said it before and I say it again, when you have people standing up to see Dr. Ennis, 6 in the morning, middle of winter, raining because they have to get in to see him because there's no family doctors. When this government – and I'm hoping someone's going to make the announcement, I'm hoping. I said it, and I don't care who hears it, I'm hoping either there's going to be – and I've been after both sides because this is going to help, to make the announcement that the nurse practitioners can bill MCP.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: I don't know who's going to do it, but I can tell you, I'm lobbying from the PC Party right to the Liberal Party that that should be done. It's an easy fix and then the former minister of Health, when he was talking about we can't do it with the *Canada Health Act*, I held up the documents, 63 in Alberta – 63 in Alberta. We can do it. Just that alone would help so many people and, for some reason, I don't know what the reason is, the money is there.

The nurse practitioners are not going to take away from the public health care system because they're doing it in the nighttime and the weekends. They hate billing people who can't afford it. They call some seniors who can't afford to come back to get their blood work, come back and get it anyway, no charge. That's the people that I know, nurse practitioners.

I ask anybody in this House, the Minister of Health to the Premier to the Leader of the Opposition, I'm begging you, get it done – get it done. I'll sit by your side. If you think that would help, I'll sit by anybody's side who's going to do that and say this is a great idea. When you see seniors who can't go back for their blood work, try it – try to tell a senior. You go ahead and try to tell a senior and all of a sudden, the government doesn't see this anymore, but I see it because I know the people. If anybody wants to try and tell the senior you can't get your blood work by the way because government is not going to let you be billed, it's wrong. It's fundamentally wrong. The money is there. The expertise is there. The need is there but for some ungodly reason we won't let it happen.

No one could ever give me a rationale. There is nobody who could give me a rationale of why government can't do it. Until then, every opportunity I get I will bring that up in the House of Assembly on behalf of the residents who haven't got a family doctor, who can't get in to see Dr. Ennis, who can't afford to go see a nurse practitioner, yet we're here, 40 of us, and we can't agree to do that.

This is one of the things I hate when government gets in, they're in there too long and they forget the needs of the common people. This is just one of them right here.

Another thing, I wrote the former minister of Health. I don't know what happened to him. I will just give you an example. People know that PCAs, personal care attendants, we're looking for people –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

E. JOYCE: Thank you very much.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Sorry, Terra Nova.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova. It's past my bedtime.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Always a pleasure to talk in the House of Assembly and certainly on the budget.

Speaker, last night, the Premier came in after I spoke and he, I guess, felt inclined to correct me on a few things. He started off his speech by saying, I practised law for a long time and I was a defence counsel for most of those years and the good thing about being a defence counsel is you get to hear the other arguments first and then poke holes in their cases.

Speaker, I am not a lawyer, but I'm not a fool either and I work hard and I listen in this House and I do what's best for the people I represent and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: What I don't do well is listen to double speak or have things put out that necessarily aren't factual or that omit some of the things that have been put out there.

I was talking about Muskrat Falls. He went on to say, we would have more money if we didn't have to mitigate rates. Do you know what? I agree with him 100 per cent, absolutely. My statement was simply around the failed execution of a project over a long period of time and the cost overruns associated with it, the necessity of power for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and how Muskrat Falls is now an operating asset that this province owns and it helps us get to the next stage with anything we do. It helps us be green, but it doesn't matter.

When I say double speak, this is what I mean. I hear the Liberals talk about the

importance of a green future and then they dismiss Muskrat Falls. I hear them talk about the importance of poverty reduction and environmental stuff, and we understand that most of the houses under Newfoundland and Labrador Housing don't have heat pumps in them, the lowest income people in the province.

I'll also go somewhere else when we're talking about money. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, last night, highlighted a bunch of things. This is either a calamity of bad decisions, good decisions executed wrongly or changed minds. The mental health facility given to a bidder \$42 million higher than the next closest bidder; Snow's Lane; Carla Foote – this is all since 2019 when I came in here – Gordon McIntosh; a flip-flop on the sugar tax; a flip-flop on the carbon tax. Oh, there are more flip-flops. Wait, I'll come back to them.

Canopy Growth on Plank Road; the travel nurse scandal; the MUN report; the Greene report; the Rothschild report – \$5 million put on a shelf; 106 Airport Road, comfort inn, call it what you want; soccer sponsorship; methylmercury; Newfoundland Housing units reported to us that there is a much larger amount of Newfoundland Housing units that were ready. When we found out, I believe the number was eight or 11 or it was much less. Personal care home audit; marine protected areas; the shingles vaccine flip-flop; Kenmount Crossing; Information and Privacy Commissioner; staff renting out houses without contracts to nurses and doctors.

One other thing I'll say about money. We would have a whole lot more money and we wouldn't be worried about the cost of Muskrat Falls, it would've been looked after the right way, had we had been getting paid for Churchill Falls since 1969.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: The Premier then went on to say – and this is his words, not mine – he

said they – referring to us – and it wasn't us. Because I can tell you, I wasn't here. I was out building Hebron when all this went down. And nobody on this side was here. He said they projected oil prices for 50 years – 50 years. He repeated it twice. Then he said when they did that, the government of the day failed in its duties to ensure that the best interests of the province's residents were safeguarded.

So I'll ask a question, it's a simple question, we saw yesterday a tobacco settlement being projected out over 30 years – 30 years. It's not 50, but it's 30, and it's acceptable and it's in our budget and it's misleading. That's the first one.

Now we'll go to the MOU. How long is the MOU for? I think everybody in this room knows, 50 years. How do we project that?

AN HON. MEMBER: Fifty-one.

L. PARROTT: Fifty-one, we'll say 51, but wait, it's not 51. That's another part of the misleading, because when they did their announcement they said it was 51 years and then we picked up on the fact that the Gull Island contract was separate and it got brought out longer. So they're projecting prices out over maybe as much as 75 or 80 years.

But when the PC government of the day, prior to Muskrat Falls, projected oil prices – and I can guarantee you, they probably had all the same information as the current sitting Finance Minister has with the tobacco companies and the negotiating team has with electricity rates. No different, they consulted.

So now they're doing the same thing. But when we did it, it was a dereliction of duties and we were neglecting the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. But they can do it and it's okay. It makes no sense whatsoever.

Then the Premier went on to say I can have people chirp at me and their facts, they think, might be true but we all know you're entitled to opinions. You're not entitled to your own facts. I think I touched a nerve because there is a lot of chirping this evening. To be honest with you, I just wanted to come in and read a document that's public record and, unfortunately, cost the taxpayers \$23 million. That public record is called *Muskrat Falls – A Misguided Project*.

Do you know what the Premier didn't say? The Premier didn't say he worked on this file for its entire duration. He didn't say how much he billed out, and I won't bring that up in here but it's easy enough for people to go see, a substantial amount. So if somebody should know about this, it's the Premier. He went on to talk about Supreme Court Justice LeBlanc's integrity and how important of an individual he is in this province, and I agree 100 per cent. Guess what they did during the MOU? They dismissed his recommendations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: This book was released; this report was released in 2020 and the recommendations have not been implemented. And, not only that, the current Premier, chose to sit there during MOU negotiations which, for the record, last night when he talked about transparency and said we had 40 Members in the House, we had 40 Members in this House debating it. This Liberal government brought you that. No, they didn't, Mr. Speaker. It was a calamity of this leader right here, real leadership, writing letters demanding that we come to this and debate it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Now, if we want to talk about transparency – the most transparent government in the history, we can see right through them. We know exactly what's going on.

The LeBlanc report clearly said – and this is the catchiest part because you've got to think, this is the Premier, this is the man who wants to lead this province, cherry-picked facts out of the LeBlanc report during the MOU debate. He picked and chose what he wanted to read and say and say what we should do.

It clearly says in Key Recommendations: "1. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador should never undertake, on its own or through one of its Crown corporations or agencies, the planning, approval" and construction – sorry, it doesn't say "and." That would change things. It says: "or construction" – planning is one thing; approval is another thing; construction is another thing – "of any large project (meaning a project with a budget of \$50 million or more) without: a. Engaging independent external experts to provide robust review, assessment and analysis of the project."

They were not going to do that until it was demanded in this House, and guess who they hired? They hired his boss while he sat on the Muskrat Falls inquiry. Think about that. Dennis Browne – and I'm not saying that Mr. Browne isn't capable or able to do this, but his boss is who's appointed to oversee these negotiations. It's as clear as mud. That's fact. He can have his opinions and I can have my opinions, but facts are facts and to quote people on the other side, facts matter, and I just clearly painted a picture of real facts that they are omitting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: He went to say: "The Public Utilities Board should review the proposed business case, reliability, cost and schedule of any large project that could potentially impact Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – electricity ratepayers. Following this review, the Public Utilities Board should report its findings to the government and the public.”

Mr. Speaker, right now, the man that helped create this report, who’s now the Premier, is throwing this in the garbage or putting it on a shelf with the rest of the reports that we’ve seen in the last 10 years where nothing has been implemented.

If we want to talk about the budget and people want to know where I’m voting, I’m not voting for the budget and I am not voting for the budget because I have absolutely no reason to trust anything that I hear. We know for a fact that the Premier has an issue with projections going out over 50 years. Churchill Falls MOU, as much as 80 years. But it’s okay when they do it. It’s perfect when they do it.

They seem to forget that their time machine stops in all the same places all the time. Whenever it’s good for them, they just get in the hot tub time machine and go back in time and they try to erase everyone’s memory and move forward. It’s not quite that simple. The reality of it is that people can see what is going on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Now the Premier came in here last night and he was bent on proving everything I said was wrong. I have no problem saying I made a comment that they had an opportunity to stop this project in 2015. Mr. Browne, clearly says in this, that they didn’t. But I will say this, they had an opportunity to stop the project. I didn’t say it would cost millions of dollars. I know what it would cost. I was a part of it. I know how it ran. I know the decisions that were made during construction when we brought in helicopters to erect power towers in the middle of the winter through the mountains, digging down through 18 feet of snow in a mad rush to go nowhere. We were three or four years away from commissioning and

they knew where we were. They knew exactly where we were.

So when it comes to facts, sometimes the facts have to come from both sides. I think what I just spoke was absolute factual and, at the end of the day, this Premier should come into this House and apologize to the people for the things he said last night because he omitted the facts. The facts are this is not necessarily a good deal, and everybody in this House wants it to be a good deal. We all want it to be a good deal.

There’s nobody in this House who doesn’t want that MOU to be the absolute best thing for the men and women of this province, but we don’t know with any certainty whatsoever – I don’t believe for one second when we’ve got statistics coming from a 10-year-old plan that they bring in and they announce to the public without ever giving a technical briefing to the Opposition and they launch their video campaign the same day, tell me what it is. It was an election year kick-off. It was farewell to the Premier. It was his legacy, and that’s what it is.

And all we’ve heard about Muskrat Falls is the exact same thing about our former premier, and I can guarantee you this is no different. This is trying to push things through to undermine – they don’t want any public people being involved with this. Mr. Browne is leading the thing. We were told March 31 he’d be in here to report to the House. He never reported to the House. The report is online, and there’s nothing in it – there’s nothing in it. So here we are.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have seven minutes left, and I’m going to talk about my constituents and my riding. I think everybody here goes through the same things, and I know it, and I’ve said it here before. If the Members opposite aren’t getting the phone calls from their constituents, they’re either not answering their phones or they’re not listening. I believe they’re answering their phones and they’re listening.

At the end of the day, we're all hearing the same things. Whether it's health care or poverty or road conditions or education, everything is gone upside down; but I'll tell you what, all of the issues we have are not because of COVID, and they're certainly not because of Muskrat Falls. They are not. It has been mismanaged, and we just listened to a list of opportunities where we had to save money or make different decisions, and we didn't do it.

If we want to come in here and say we're going to be transparent and make the right decisions, then we have to do it collaboratively. Instead, we're buying and selling land, and doing all these underhanded things, and oh, there's nothing to see here, folks. Move on. Everything is okay. Dum-de-dum, everything is good. It's not all good. It is not all good.

If you come out to my riding and go to the hospital and you look at what's going on out there, it's atrocious. Now, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure today was talking about hospitals down in his district. If hospitals are the way he says down in his district, I envy him because I don't deal with it. I sat here yesterday –

E. LOVELESS: What was it I said?

L. PARROTT: You said you had a great situation, that people were happy and they were getting the care they needed. That's exactly – I'm paraphrasing you, but you said –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member to address the Chair.

L. PARROTT: I'm giving you credit, maybe you should take it.

Wherever you go in this province, no matter where it is, people are suffering through the same issues. Everywhere you go. The order of magnitude that people deal with it is entirely different everywhere you go.

When we come in this House, I think everyone comes in here with the exact right intent. We all come in here to help our constituents; we all come in here to try and make this place better. We all ran on those principles, I know we all believe in those principles, and I know it's exactly why we're all here. When we ask questions in this House, it's because questions need to be asked. Those questions need to be asked to get to the bottom of things. Imagine if there were no questions asked on Canopy Growth or Snow's Lane, or no questions asked on the MOU or no questions asked on any of the things that questions are asked on in here.

The problem is very simple. The problem is sometimes the questions aren't welcome, but very seldom do we get the answers. They sit over there and they can't wait to come back on a rebuttal to a preamble, but the questions get ignored, and a lot of those times they're very important questions. You would think that a Minister of the Crown would want to address those questions, especially if they're not wrong. If a question is asked, and they know that they're doing it right, then why not answer it – why not answer it?

So the Connaigre Peninsula, just because I was trying to be nice earlier, but the Connaigre Peninsula had a closure in August of 2024. That's not that long ago. March 28, March 21, January 30, January 15 – this is all on NLHS.

E. LOVELESS: Closure of what?

L. PARROTT: Temporary closure emergency service, virtual ER, at the Connaigre Peninsula Health. Temporary closure emergency service, Connaigre Health Peninsula. All on NLHS. You can go on and look at it. So either they're wrong –

E. LOVELESS: It's not closures if virtual care is being provided.

L. PARROTT: Oh, okay, there you go. We got it now – we got it now. It's all good now. It's fixed. Clear as mud. That's what you said earlier. Perhaps everybody should read *Hansard* from time to time.

Speaker, the future of this province lies inside of this House, it really does. The issues that we face are tremendous. Everybody knows it. It's tremendous. Like I said earlier, whether it's the deficit or people that are hungry or homelessness, all of those things are so huge. We come in and pick and choose our numbers.

I said the other day, we talk about how great our employment rates are. We don't ever consider the fact that 22,000 or 23,000 of those people work in Alberta. We don't ever tell the truth about things. We come in and we brag about how many doctors we've hired, but we can never tell anyone how many have left. We come in and we tell people how many nurses we've hired, but guess what? The offers are out there, but most of them aren't working.

Why can't we just come in here and be truthful? Why can't we just come in here and put the facts on the table? Put the facts on the table.

SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: If someone wants to stand on a point of order, they're more than welcome to.

AN HON. MEMBER: Why can't we –

L. PARROTT: Yeah, I said we.

SPEAKER: I said you are treading it close. Move on.

L. PARROTT: I am not accusing anyone of anything. What I am saying is that the Members of this House have a responsibility to the people that put them here, and being truthful is part of that. Very simple.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: We talk about health care, and if you've spent any time inside of health care, I will be the first one to say, once you get inside of health care we have a tremendous system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: We have a group of people that work in this province that are beyond incredible, and Nurses' Week it's important to say that. But they're strained, they're broken. I'll tell you, there are two things that we don't consider.

When we have a Health Minister that's more concerned about care than health or health than care and doesn't realize that that's two words that combine together, that includes the people that work in the system and the people that need the services that are delivered, we will never succeed. That is what has happened here time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, I'll take my place.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I'm going to get an opportunity to stand again and talk about a budget and talk about a debate. But I want to, firstly, congratulate this team that I have right here. We just heard from one of them because we will stand for Newfoundland and Labrador, and I will now thank every single one of them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: They have all taken the time to speak on this debate at every opportunity that they've had to get up and speak. They've talked about their districts. They've

talked about the province and they've talked about individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador that are being impacted, that have been impacted, that are struggling with the cost of living, that are struggling with access to health care and are worried about the safety in their communities. Every one of these people here in my caucus and other Members on this side have stood and talked about the challenges that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are facing, and they are indeed facing challenges.

So I just wanted to say publicly to everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador: We got your back and after this next election, we'll be there to support you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: On that note, I will stand here right now in response to the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands who asked me and others to commit so that no person, no patient in Newfoundland and Labrador should have to pay to see a nurse practitioner, and I will guarantee you, Sir, that a PC government will ensure that no patient (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We'll make that announcement at the end of the week. That is something that we have talked about and lobbied for and talked about and talked about. The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands has brought it up on several occasions and he's also brought up the conditions in the new hospital in Corner Brook. I am part of that Western region. Corner Brook is our regional hospital and when you build a brand-new hospital and all of a sudden it's full the day it's open, the people are in the corridors and this government's solution, the former Minister of Health, the Premier of the province, their solution for the overcapacity of this brand new hospital was to tell seniors to double up in their long-term care beds.

That was the solution that was offered. That was the solution that was put in a press release. That's not good enough, and it was only because of the efforts of the people on this side of the House that said no, that's not acceptable. That's not acceptable. We won't tolerate that. Something better needs to be done and, finally, there is something being done and the old hospital is now being used.

So, yes, that's being done. It should have been done right from the beginning, but that all goes back to planning because if you think about planning, how important planning is, let's talk about the new long-term care facility that was built on the site of the new hospital.

If you go and talk about it or look in the Department of Health and go through their forecast of what the number of long-term care beds were projected to be in '25-'26 for the Corner Brook region, you will see a significant more number projected than what is actually there in that new long-term care facility. Maybe if that had been built larger, maybe they could have accommodated more of those patients. They knew when they built the new hospital that there was no alternate level of care unit in it, yet there was an alternate level of care unit in the old hospital.

Where was the planning to make sure that those patients, when it was ready to open up that, actually, there was somewhere for them to go? When I think about the new hospital and oncology services for all of us that live in Western Newfoundland who still have to pack up and come to St. John's to see an oncologist, even though there's a brand-new facility right there in Corner Brook that has the ability, has the equipment to be able to provide that service but we have no oncologist.

I think back to the photo ops, the photo ops were happening when the new hospital was just being constructed. The beams being signed by the Premier and the minister and

others, signing their names to the beams as this hospital was about to begin construction. Maybe if somebody had to take the time to go out and speak to a med student and get them to sign a contract, at that time, to study to be an oncologist –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: – they would be graduated and ready to go to work in the new hospital, but, no, that's planning and that's something that hasn't been around in this Liberal government. They have not been there to plan. They failed to plan. We've seen that with all these examples that have been read out earlier by the Member for Mount Pearl, by my colleague here from Terra Nova, examples of things that have happened because of planning, because of a lack of planning.

If there's anything that defines the last 10 years other than crises: crises in health care, crises in education, crises in affordable housing, this is what you have seen, crises, crises, crises. If there's anything else that defines this government, it is reaction. When you have no plans, because when you have no ability or no thought process of what you're going to do and no strategies, long-term strategies, then you find yourself reacting. We can look at examples of expenditure that have happened over the last number of years that will be talked about and caused by reaction. I would argue, when you are reacting instead of planning, you will spend more money because you're trying to fix something that maybe you should have thought about a long time ago.

Now, here we are after 10 years, and we're hearing lots of announcements still about things that are going to be done. After 10 years, we're talking about the things that are going to be done and they're always pushed out it seems, always pushed out, but that's not planning. What we need is a government that really plans.

When I travelled all over this province of ours and I've spoken to a great many people and you find out when you talk to people in your communities – I don't have to tell all of you this, I know you all have the same things – the resilience of the people in our communities that we visit, especially those of us that work in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and live in rural Newfoundland, their ingenuity of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and their ability to survive, but you will also hear their desire to stay here, to make this place home –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: – to live in their communities. What they want from a government is a government that will help them do that.

We all know, and all of us that live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador understand, we can't have everything that maybe a bigger city might have, but there are the basic services that we ought to be able to have, like access to a primary care provider without having to pay for it; clean drinking water; affordable housing. These are all basic essentials. A school system where I can feel safe, or a parent can feel safe dropping their child off to school, where that parent who has an autistic child, or a child that needs help know that they're going to go school and that help will be there for them.

So there are lots of opportunities in this province and lots of people that live all over this great province of ours, but they need and they want a government that's prepared to help them; a government that's listening to them. That's what we hear a lot of as we travel around the province: a government that's lost its way; a Liberal government that doesn't listen to them anymore; they feel they're not being listened to.

Clearly, clearly, clearly, they are asking us and telling us their stories. I've talked about

them here, all of us on this side of the House have talked a lot about the stories that we've heard from people all over Newfoundland and Labrador, their struggles, their successes, the great ingenuity of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and we know that there are. There are lots of great stories of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and the great work we're doing. But, at the end of the day, the three things that continue to come up consistently are health care, cost of living and the safety in our communities.

Those things that are the three pillars that need to be addressed. Because we can talk about a Health Accord – one of the key aspects of the Health Accord is the piece around it, the social determinants of health, which seems to have been somehow or other not addressed. When we think about clean drinking water – we just talked about that – I think of my own district and I think about the number of communities now who have no drinking water.

When you drive into Stephenville, there is an outlet there where there is actually a water set-up running out of the stream. I think the town may test it. But I can tell you that on any given day, there are more people lined up at that place than there are at McDonald's, in their line-up, in their drive-through. But that needs to change. People are carrying buckets of water with them back to their homes on the Port au Port Peninsula because the wells have either dried up or become contaminated.

So there are a lot of things that we need to be doing when it comes to those type of situations that are not being done. What do we characterize the last 10 years? What are the last things that characterize this Liberal government? Reckless spending, poor decision-making, arrogance and a lack of transparency. That's what has become the hallmark of this Liberal government and this Liberal decade.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We have talked about a lot of the issues that have been addressed here, and again some of the decisions that have been made, that have been questionable. All of them have been addressed, been talked about – soccer teams, reports that nobody was allowed to see. There are all kinds of them. But clearly, clearly, clearly, there needs to be a change.

If you want to hear about that, it wasn't that long ago that the Liberal government introduced a budget and said: Change is in the air. Well, I can tell you, Speaker, change is definitely in the air, and it's definitely in the air in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: People want change.

A few minutes ago, my colleague talked about the MOU. The MOU, the idea, the situation, we wrote the Premier back went that was first announced. As my colleague had said, we all want this new deal. We all need a new deal that works better. For too long, we have not been the principal beneficiary of our own resources, whether it's in our fishing industry or whether it's in our hydroelectricity industry, but we also want a deal that talks about the next generation, and is done for the next generation, not the next election.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Unfortunately, what we have seen is a rush. A rush to move a deal through, an MOU into a deal to be signed, to sign over to Quebec the rights to our water and our hydroelectricity in Labrador. Quebec in the driver's seat once again for more than 50 years.

I want to raise an issue that maybe the new Premier has already addressed with the prime minister, I don't know, but that has to do with every single premier in the country had met with the previous prime minister and talked about an energy corridor. They

all agreed, all the premiers and the prime minister and the new prime minister, Prime Minister Carney, has talked about an energy corridor across Canada.

You know, for so long, we've been waiting for this. Yes, Mr. Trump and his tariff has caused us a lot of grief, has caused a lot of concerns, but coming out of that there is also opportunity. One of those opportunities is the talk finally across the country of an energy corridor. I'm sure there's politicians in here that have heard lots of conversations about energy corridors for years and years and years and been around politics a lot longer than I have, but now it seems there's a general consensus that an energy corridor should be something that Canada finally is prepared to look at and do.

When we talk about energy corridors, it can't simply be a corridor that simply moves oil from the West Coast to the East Coast because when I think of an energy corridor, my energy corridor includes Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: My energy corridor allows Newfoundland and Labrador to export its hydroelectricity from east to west.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: It's not simply selling our hydroelectricity to Quebec and allowing them to take advantage of an energy corridor. Let's make sure, before we go and sign long-term deals and long-term commitments that will commit us for another 50 years with one customer, that we explore where is this energy corridor going to go. I am assuming the Premier has had those conversations with the prime minister, considering that they've all talked about it before. That's something that we need to find out about, something I'd like to – maybe the Premier will talk about.

At the end of the day, government should simply be about the people, not about the politicians. So I would hope that that's what this budget should have been about. Even the former premier called this a caretaker budget. He called it a caretaker budget. The former participant for the leadership of the Liberal Party, during his campaign, said that the budget didn't go far enough when it came to seniors. It didn't go far enough.

Again, even within their own caucus, there have been concerns raised about this budget as a caretaker budget, as a budget that doesn't go far enough. I keep thinking and I keep going back in all of this to the people in Newfoundland and Labrador and what is it we're trying to do here.

Every time we come in this House of Assembly, we come to represent 40 districts, that represent the entire population of Newfoundland and Labrador, each with their own individual issues but a lot of them in common. As I had talked about earlier, a lot of those commonalities have to deal with the three major issues that people are dealing with right now.

I don't think I'm telling anybody in this House anything new when it comes to health care, cost of living and safer communities. These are the three issues and you can break them down in any different way you want. There are lots of things that we will do and plan for the cost of living.

I also want to say that when I think about Newfoundland and Labrador, and rural Newfoundland and Labrador, people sometimes – and we've heard it today about the deal with Quebec in the long term, the '69 deal and people say that was the worst deal we ever did in our province and I have stood up and said on many occasions and said no, I don't consider it the worst deal. The worst deal for me was in 1949 when we joined Confederation and gave up the management of our fishery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: That's something we've been paying for since 1949. For 75 years we've been struggling with that decision and we've seen the impacts of that decision. I know for 75 years now, as a province, we've been talking about some kind of management, some kind of seat at the table; we continue to work on that. But that is something that we will continue to fight for so that no time, anywhere in the future, should a federal minister be deciding on the size of our boats, the amount of our quotas or when we can go fishing and the size of our gear.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: It's time we had a better say and more say.

My colleague talked about the mackerel fishery earlier today. Here's a fishery that continued to be harvested by Americans, yet our boats are tied up because of a federal decision in Ottawa. This has to stop. We need to make sure that these people, that this federal government listens to us and that we have a better say in our fishing industry.

In terms of where we go and where we will go as a party, all of us in the PC caucus, we all believe in a prosperous Newfoundland and Labrador. We all believe in a province where life is affordable and we intend to deliver a budget and a plan after the election that will show people how we will improve the affordability of their lives, how we will lower their taxes.

We believe in access to health care, which includes access to primary health care, where nobody has to pay for a private primary care provider or pay to see a nurse practitioner; nobody will have to worry about having to wonder if they can afford to cover or pay to go to their appointments, because we'll make sure that we're there to cover

that cost for them. Those are commitments we will make.

We will turn around and make sure, as I said, that life is affordable, that health care is accessible, that our communities are safe. We will leave no opportunity untapped and leave nobody behind. Because right now too many people are being left behind.

Speaker, we want that type of province for all of us. We want that for all of Newfoundland and Labrador. We want a province where people simply don't come from, they come to.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We want a province where people want to live, not leave. We want a province where more people pay less tax, not less people paying more tax.

These are the commitments that I make to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will bring you more affordable living. We will provide better access to health care and we will work with you in your communities and make sure that we leave no opportunity untapped. We will be there for you every single day: openness, transparency and accountability like you have never seen before.

Speaker, I won't take any more time tonight.

Thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Any further speakers?

The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Immigration and Growth.

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

I would like to thank the hon. Member, the Leader of the Opposition, for his very, very eloquent words and his recap of his

positions⁷⁴ and his party's positions. I admire him for the inclusion that he expressed to his caucus. That is indeed a great form of collegiality. I respect him for that.

I have to say that in reflection of his own actions, looking at our team over here and our leader, who I am exceptionally, exceptionally proud of, and the leadership that he has shown in a very short term as the Premier of our province –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

G. BYRNE: – I can say too that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador must feel well served by this Legislature and by the duties that we conduct here on the floor of the House of Assembly on a daily basis.

With that said, I also would like to express, on the heels of some of the words that were expressed by the Leader of the Opposition, but as well as my own colleagues and his own colleagues, the people of Corner Brook, Western Newfoundland, Southern Labrador, Southwestern Newfoundland, and indeed in parts of Central Newfoundland are exceptionally very proud and very pleased with the health care investments that occurred in Corner Brook in Western Memorial Regional Hospital and the region with both the long-term care facilities and with the acute-care facilities.

It goes without saying that this was a project with a long history and a controversial past. It was 2007, in budget 2007, under the administration of former Premier Danny Williams, that it was announced that there would be a brand-new hospital with concurrent long-term care facilities in it. Speaker, 2007 that announcement was made with an overall budget envelope of \$116 million, I believe.

Now, in the time, value of money and the consideration of all of this, I could think everyone can appreciate that there was immediately concern about the legitimacy of

that earnest promise. With that said, each and every year thereafter, the good people of Corner Brook and the region waited in hope and faithful expectation that this would indeed, this major project, this hospital campus would come to pass.

Mr. Speaker, it never did. It never, ever did during that entire term of that government, despite movement of leadership, movement of ministers, and as much has been said on the floor of the House this evening about the change in ministers, every time this government has had a succession of leadership, the leadership has always advanced. We get new and fresh ideas and new ways of doing things, working in concert with what we have built. I cannot help but think that that is exactly the model that occurred with the evolution of health care services in Western, Southwestern, Northern and Southern Labrador and Central with the new health care facilities in Corner Brook because that is the region that it serves, the footprint that it serves.

As I look at the evolution of that project, you know, it was said that the current footprint of 309 beds to the health care campus in Corner Brook was insufficient, and we always reply, and that's why I'm proud of the work we're doing, but also equally proud of the fact that the work continues and we are putting 45 new beds into the old footprint, appropriate accommodations in the Western Memorial Regional Hospital building as it exists. Work has been done; work has been continued.

But I just want to really highlight something here. There's a 309-bed complex that was actually acted upon by this government. I'd like to point out to the House that 18 months prior to the collapse of the PC government in December of 2015 – 18 months prior to the collapse of the Progressive Conservative in 2015 – there was an announcement on March 20, 2013, that the total complement should be 260 beds of long term and acute care beds.

So 18 months before the collapse of the PC government in 2015, they had made the commitment and promise that if they could ever get around to it 260 beds for both long-term care and acute care would be sufficient – 18 months prior. That in comparison to the 309 beds that this administration put in.

Now why is this particularly relevant? Because I'll address to this hon. House that on August 18, 2011, through Order-in-Council 2011-204, who was put in place as the Assistant Deputy Minister of Regional Health Services? The current Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

So the Member who criticizes the acute care beds and long-term care beds was indeed the same individual that had a core function in deciding that 260 beds would be totally sufficient for the future evolution of health care needs in the Corner Brook, Western Newfoundland area. The current Member for Stephenville - Port au Port was indeed the Assistant Deputy Minister of Regional Health Services, who agreed and who advised former Minister Susan Sullivan and others that 260 beds – and at that time, 18 months prior to the total budget complement for what is today, what we built as over a \$550 million hospital, they had only budgeted \$227 million.

So the point of all this, Mr. Speaker, is very simply this: Work has been done by this government, work is continuing by this government to improve health care facilities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

G. BYRNE: But for those who would suggest and use a sharp pointed finger to suggest they have a better way, I would simply remind those individuals – because trust me, there's a reason why the people of Corner Brook have consistently rejected the Progressive Conservative way, the Progressive Conservative strategy, the PC way for decades, is because they know this history all too well.

When the Order-in-Council was issued installing the current Member for Stephenville - Port au Port as the Assistant Deputy Minister of Regional Health Services within Health and Community Services, the people of Corner Brook and area know that the very advice that we should actually have 49 less beds under the PC plan than what the Liberal plan was, came from the current Leader of the Opposition. It's why his current rhetoric falls very flat.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board speaks now, we will close debate.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I have received a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

SPEAKER: Do you want to speak?

S. COADY: Oh, to close debate. Sorry, the hour is late.

I thank every Member of this House of Assembly for participating in the debate that we have had, the discussions that we have had, the raucous, sometimes, discussions that we have had. I will say to the Members of this House of Assembly, this budget, I think, is very balanced. We are investing in education. I think that is a smart investment, Speaker. I think Members of this House would agree it is a smart investment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: We are continuing to place a lot of attention, the majority of our attention, about 40 per cent of our budget is for health

care as the people of this province know we're really working to transform health care from ambulatory care, whole new ambulance system, to investments in technology, to investments in family care teams, to investments in infrastructure, to investments –

AN HON. MEMBER: Roadwork.

S. COADY: Pardon me?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Roadwork.

S. COADY: Oh yes, I'm coming to that. I'm still on health care.

These are the types of investments that people of the province need. I know Members in this House of Assembly very much are focused on ensuring a proper health care system.

Sometimes I think I hear two things. I hear from the Member's opposite: more investment, more investment. You're not spending enough in health. You're not spending enough in education. You're not spending enough on seniors. You're not spending enough on transportation. Then, every once in a while, I hear, but you know we have a high deficit. We have a high debt. We have concerns about it.

Speaker, I will say, the words that we have often used in this House of Assembly, that it's all about balance when it comes to budgets. It is all about ensuring that we have the requirements for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador at heart, and I believe this government has their utmost concerns at heart. I've heard Members opposite say, you know, well you're not doing enough. You're not doing enough.

I will say to the Members opposite that we are doing everything possible, absolutely everything, to ensure that we are addressing affordability. Speaker, \$750 million – I'm going to repeat that – \$750 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: We have put that money back in people's pockets. We continue to address the concerns. I was listening to debate today. Somebody in the House of Assembly asked a question around children and making sure that we lift them and raise them out of poverty. Couldn't agree more. That's why we have increased the child benefit by 300 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: Three hundred per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: I listen intently when the Members opposite say we have to do more for seniors – we have to do more for seniors. I completely agree, as does everyone on this side of the House, most importantly our Premier. That is why we have moved very strongly to raise the Seniors' Benefit by 15 per cent to index not just the payment, but also the thresholds, index it to inflation, just what our Seniors' Advocate has said is important.

People with disabilities: starting in July, we will be giving people with disabilities \$400 per month.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Speaker, \$400 per month, and we're going to be contributing to their savings plans an additional amount.

Speaker, we have done so much in education, adding 400 new educators this year. Last year, we focused on student assistants. We're working on an Education Accord. We have provided \$10-a-day child care. Go back four years ago, Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: – and the price of child care was about \$45 per child – \$10 a day. Let me tell you, my friend found out she was having twins and she was really – this was prior to the \$10-a-day child care and she said, I don't know how I'm going to afford three children in child care. Do you know what? She spends less than one child –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's getting very difficult to hear the Member speaking.

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

S. COADY: Now, I heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about roads, how important roads are, and they are. Speaker, when you drive across – we have difficulty in our province, obviously with weather. We know have heaves of frost and snow, but roads, transportation, critically important infrastructure. I can say that with this government, we really increased the amount of money going to roads. I almost gave my colleague who was the Minister of Transportation at the time and is today a heart attack when I told him, why don't we be bold and give a billion dollars more?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: A billion dollars more for roads.

G. BYRNE: That's a lot of money.

S. COADY: That's a lot of money.

Now, Speaker, I can also say that we have, right today, a very robust economy. We're leading the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: I know the Members opposite don't want to hear this, because it doesn't fit their narrative, but it is important to the

people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It may not be important to you across the way, but I can tell you to the people of the province it is important. The economy matters, jobs matter.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: We're leading the country in gross domestic product increases – leading the country in gross domestic product.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: We have one of the lowest unemployment rates we've ever had in recorded history. We have the highest amount of retail sales we ever had. In fact, I just checked the other day about February, because I heard that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask Members on both sides of the House, if you want to have a conversation, take it outside. It's very difficult to hear the minister speak. She is right there in front of me and I can barely hear her talk. That's to both sides of the House.

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

S. COADY: I speak loudly. My husband has a hearing issue, so I speak loudly.

I will say to the Members opposite, look, the economy matters. The fact that we are leading the country in gross domestic product, the fact that we have the highest retail sales we've ever had – I was trying to say about the car sales, Speaker. I can tell you that in February, we had a year-over-year increase of 16 per cent in car sales – 16 per cent, and we don't have a good economy.

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SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Sixteen per cent increase in car sales.

I would say the investments that we've made in this budget, \$90 million for oil and gas – why? Because we want to increase the oil and gas sector. I know the Member opposite from Terra Nova supports that. I know you support that. It's a very important investment.

We put a million dollars in gas development, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: We have an incredible gas opportunity in Newfoundland and Labrador. Let's maximize that; let's produce LNG offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

Members opposite know about hydrogen in this province. We are an energy superpower. I've just talked oil. I've just talked about gas. I could go on and on about hydrogen. We have five projects in various states of play. Now it's a nascent industry, it's going to take some time, but we have the land, the water, the wind in this province and the skilled workforce to deliver that to fellow people of our earth who need hydrogen energy and hydroelectricity.

It was incredible to watch experts come before this House – I don't know if it's ever happened before. I don't think it's ever happened in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador that we have experts before the House. In a memorandum of understanding, not in definitive agreement, we wanted this to go before the House to allow the Opposition to question experts, and we provided the opportunity and I was so proud to sit in this House to allow that opportunity, to bring forward why we should be moving towards definitive agreements. We have now an Oversight Committee on this. I think that's critically important as well, to have oversight.

We did listen. Look, I can talk at length and ad nauseam, as others have tonight about the Muskrat Falls inquiry. We all know the impacts to Newfoundland and Labrador. We know what the commissioner said that by the time we became in power, we could not stop that project. All the contracts were already let.

Speaker, there was nothing we could do, and that's not my opinion. That is what the commissioner of the inquiry wrote. That's not my opinion. It's what he wrote in his documents. We're spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year offsetting the boondoggle – that's what they called it, the boondoggle – of Muskrat Falls.

Now, Speaker, I did listen; I do listen. I sit in this House regularly. Everybody here can say that. I sit in this House a lot. My physiotherapist tells me I sit too much, so I will say that.

I listened to a Member opposite talk about the tenets of good governance: transparency, accountability, openness and effectiveness. Allow me to say that we have a very robust accountability system. It's new to government. We brought it in over the last number of years, a whole division of accountability, making sure that we're bringing in not just departments, but entities. Bringing them before Treasury Board, going through that. We have a transparency and accountability framework that we have. Openness, accountability, effectiveness.

I would say to every Member in this House of Assembly, without fear of contradiction, we have transformed the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Thank you.

I don't have the numbers in front of me because I'm trying to speak very quickly because I know it's important, but

everybody is now in their chairs, so I'll take my leave.

I will say to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that we have been good stewards of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have been effective in what we have been able to change. There is more work to be done. I have great faith in our new Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: I think that we will be continuing on a path of prosperity for Newfoundland and Labrador. I will take my seat by saying I implore the people of this province and the people of this House to vote in favour of this budget, to give us the opportunity to continue with the work we're doing in education, in health care, with seniors, with children, with the economy. I'll end on that note.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It is moved and seconded that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of this government.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Call in the Members.

Division

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready for the vote?

All those in favour, please rise.

CLERK (Hawley George): John Hogan, Lisa Dempster, John Haggie, Steve Crocker, Bernard Davis, Paul Pike, Scott Reid, Gerry Byrne, Siobhan Coady, Pam Parsons, Elvis Loveless, Krista Lynn Howell, Fred Hutton, Sarah Stoodley, John Abbott, Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Jamie Korab, Perry Trimper, Lucy Stoyles.

SPEAKER: All those against the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Tony Wakeham, Barry Petten, Lloyd Parrott, Paul Dinn, Helen Conway Ottenheimer, Joedy Wall, Jeff Dwyer, Lin Paddock, Lela Evans, Loyola O'Driscoll, Craig Pardy, Pleaman Forsey, Chris Tibbs, Jim McKenna, Jordan Brown, Eddie Joyce, Paul Lane.

Speaker, the ayes:19; the nays: 17.

SPEAKER: I declare the motion is carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: This is like it's a replay, Speaker.

I have a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

SPEAKER: All rise.

As Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit Estimates of the sums required for the Public Service of the province for the year ending 31 March 2026, by way of further Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of sections 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, I recommend these Estimates to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: _____
Lieutenant Governor

Please be seated.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that the message be referred to a Committee of the Whole on Supply.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole on Supply and that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into the Committee.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Trimper): Order, please!

This Committee is dealing with resolution and Supply bill.

Resolution

"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for grating to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2026 the sum of \$6,457,051,700."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Chair.

Today we are discussing the *Supply Act, 2025* for main Supply which is introduced following the completion of the budget debate. The requirement to introduce debate and pass a main Supply bill to cover government expenditures during the fiscal year is a requirement of the *Constitution Act, 1867* and the *Financial Administration Act*.

Approval of this bill will ensure funds are available to meet government expenditures

—

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Thank you.

S. COADY: — during the 2025-2026 fiscal year and provides sufficient legislative authority for government to meet its financial obligations. The main Supply bill is a routine and administrative measure. The introduction of this bill will have no incremental impact on the province's financial position in '25-'26 beyond what is included in the *Budget 2025*.

The total of main Supply bill is \$6,457,051,700. When combined with the previously approved \$3.9 billion in Interim Supply gives a total of \$10,406,686,600 which ties to the total amount voted as per Statement C of the budget document statements and schedules and the details in the Estimates 2025.

The total amount voted, \$10.4 billion, represents the amount of the total gross cash expenditures, minus payments that are preapproved by statute, such as interest payments, deferred pension contributions, debt management expenses and the

salaries of the Auditor General and the Comptroller General.

Of course, the highest amount is attributed to health care. Record high investments have increased the health care budget by more than 40 per cent since 2020. The time frame covered by the Interim Supply bill was three months, from April 1, 2025, to June 30, 2025, and represented approximately 36 per cent of the 20204-2025 budgeted at current capital amount gross expenditures. The main Supply bill will provide funding for the remainder of the fiscal year up to March 31 of 2026.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I'm not going to tolerate it. We're going to have one person speaking.

The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Any further speakers?

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Resolution is carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service." (Bill 107)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 to 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

CLERK: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Schedule is carried.

On motion, Schedule carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: Whereas it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the Public Service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2026 and for other purposes relating to the Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act for Granting to his Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

The long title is carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the resolution and Bill 107 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 107 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: And I need a seconder.

L. DEMPSTER: Chair, I move, seconded by the Premier, that the total contained in the Estimates in the amount of \$10,406,686,600 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year be carried, and I further move that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto.

CHAIR: The motion is that the total contained in the Estimates in the amount of \$10,406,686,600 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year be carried and that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Against?

It's carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville and Chair of the Committee.

P. TRIMPER: Speaker, the Committee of the Whole on Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed the amount of \$10,406,686,600 contained in the Estimates of Supply for the 2025-2026 fiscal year and have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed that they have considered the report and that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, that the resolution be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: *"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2026 the sum of \$6,457,051,700."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that the resolution be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: *"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2026 the sum of \$6,457,051,700."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, for leave to introduce the Supply bill, Bill 107, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Deputy Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 107, the Supply bill, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service," carried. (Bill 107)

CLERK: A bill, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 107)

On motion, Bill 107 read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that the Supply bill be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Supply bill be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 107)

On motion, Bill 107 read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that the Supply bill be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Supply bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 107)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public

Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2026 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 107)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Finance Minister on successfully delivering and completing her sixth budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: And I will further please her by saying, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board that this House do now adjourn.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: It was moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

Is the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

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