



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume LI

FIRST SESSION

Number 22

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

Thursday

April 30, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we begin this afternoon's proceedings, I'm going to rule on a couple of points of order that have been raised in the House.

First of all, I would like to rule on the point of order raised by the Government House Leader on April 21 and April 22, 2026.

I've now had an opportunity to review *Hansard*. The Government House Leader raised Standing Order 48, which allows the Speaker to address the conduct of a Member who persists in irrelevance or needless repetition. On both occasions, the Government House Leader cited statements by made the Members for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi and Gander, respectively.

I note that on April 21, the Government House Leader also stood on a similar point of order in relation to statements made by the Member for Mount Scio. I found no point of order at that time.

The requirement for relevance exists to ensure the expeditious conduct of debate. Allowing Members to speak on matters not connected to the subject matter under debate would impair the ability of this hon. House to manage its time efficiently.

With that said, what is or is not relevant is not always easy to define, and this rule can be difficult to enforce as the Speaker must also respect the freedom of speech afforded all Members. As pointed out in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Fourth Edition, at paragraph 13.29:

"It is not always possible to judge the relevance (or the repetitiveness) of a member's remarks until they have spoken at some length or even completed their remarks. The Speaker must exercise

discretion: if the rules are applied too strictly, they have the potential for severely curtailing debate; if they are neglected, the resultant loss of debating time may prevent other members from participating in debate. Particular circumstances, the mood of the House and the relative importance of the matter under debate will influence the rigidity with which the Speaker interprets these rules."

During second reading, debate should be limited to the general principle of the bill. Bill 9 would amend the *Future Fund Act* to make such changes as modifying the circumstances under which deposits are made into the fund, and limiting purposes for which money may be withdrawn from the fund. In my view, the scope and general objectives of the bill would invite considerable latitude in terms of topics that could be considered relevant.

Members should note that the standard for relevance will be different in the Committee stage. The referral of a bill to the Committee of the Whole involves a close examination of its contents, clause by clause. During the Committee stage, Members' speeches must be strictly relevant to the individual clauses being considered, with the exception of clause 1, which, by convention, may relate to any clause of the bill under consideration.

The references made by the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi and the Member for Gander during second reading of Bill 9, which prompted the points of order, did not form the principal theme of their speech. If given the opportunity to continue, both Members may well have made their connection to the scope and objectives of the bill.

When viewed in context of the Members' entire speech, as recorded in *Hansard*, I do not find that they violate the rule of relevance. As such, there is no point of order. I would, however, remind all Members to be mindful of Standing Order

48 and the need to remain relevant in debate.

While there has been some reference to whether or not Bill 9 is a money bill, I note that in a report to the House of Assembly dated March 2022, the Standing Orders Committee recommended that the Speaker enforce the current Standing Order 48, relevancy, during all debate, including those of money bills. This hon. House voted to concur with that report, and I will continue to follow that direction in applying the Standing Order.

As Speaker, it is within in my jurisdiction to maintain the balance between the need for relevant debate and freedom of speech, to which Members are entitled. I will afford an appropriate measure of latitude with respect to the scope and objectives of bills before this hon. House.

On the second point of order, I would like to rule on a point of order raised by the Government House Leader on April 22 with respect to a Member reflecting on a vote of the House. The context for the point of order was the matter of the Member for Mount Pearl North listing by name Members of this House and indicating how they voted on a bill. In particular, the Government House Leader argued: "Speaker, we're not allowed to go backwards in time and talk about how people voted in this House. It is clearly in article 49."

I ruled on the use of names in this House at the time the point of order was raised and will not revisit that issue. However, with respect to the matter of Standing Order 49, I would bring to the attention of Members to the final ruling of the 50th General Assembly delivered on May 22, 2025. Then Speaker Bennett stated the following: "In considering the point of order, I've considered the context of the statement of the Member and whether a reference to a vote of the Member equates to reflecting on the vote of the House, contrary to Standing Order 49."

"The fifth edition of *Parliamentary Practice in British Columbia* provides guidance as to what constitutes reflection upon a vote. Chapter 7.36 states the following: 'The rule serves to prevent repetition of past debates, and reflection on a passed vote may be tantamount to a reflection on the majority, and thus on the Legislative Assembly itself. This also speaks to the well-established practice that a question, once put and decided in the affirmative or negative, cannot be questioned or debated again in the same Session.'

"Thus, a general reference to a vote by a particular Member does not mean that a Member is reflecting upon the vote of the House in accordance with Standing Order 49. The reflection on a vote of the House would involve questioning the outcome of a vote or repeating the substance of the debate to which the vote led to.

"I note that during this General Assembly it has been common for Members on both sides of the House to use language referring to a vote in a manner similar to the usage during Question Period on May 20, 2025. In these circumstances, Members refer to the results of a vote, whether the bill or motion was carried or defeated and what happened when the vote of the House was conducted. Where Division was called by the House for a vote, the vote of each individual Member forms part of the public record and is accessible through *Hansard*."

The Speaker considered whether there was repetition of the debate and/or a question or challenge to the vote itself. He indicated that a mere reference to a vote by a Member does not constitute a reflection of the vote of the House.

Further, paragraph 12.90 of *House of Commons Practice and Procedure* states: "It is not in order for members to 'reflect' upon (i.e., to reconsider or comment upon) votes of the House. However, the Speaker has clarified that this rule does not preclude comments concerning an opinion

expressed by a member, or even by a party, during a vote.”

I would note that an overly narrow interpretation of Standing Order 49 may impede the business of the House or impede Members in the operation of their parliamentary duties. During debate in this House, matters which are the subject of an earlier debate and vote arise often, as many continue to be matters of interest to the House and to the province.

Therefore, I rule, while the references to names of Members were clearly out of order and I ruled accordingly at the time, the Member did not reflect on the vote of the House but, rather, listed of the outcome of a recorded division, which is a matter of public record and reflected in *Hansard*. I, therefore, rule that there is no point of order.

Thank you.

Today, visiting the public gallery, we have Terri Andrews, the owner of TaDa! Events, which is the subject of a Member’s statement. She is accompanied by members of the company: Sheilagh Guy Murphy, Wayne Pardy, Amy Edwards, Dan Lasby, Hannah Brinson, John Andrews and Pamela Pittman.

Welcome to our gallery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also visiting today in the public gallery are relatives and friends of the late Ron Hynes, who is also the subject of a Member’s statement.

Welcomes to Ron’s nephew, Joel Thomas Hynes and his wife Louisa; niece Lois Hynes and son Gabriel; Colleen Power and Newfoundland entertainment icons, Mary Walsh and Sandy Morris.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: We also have in our public gallery, members of the Trail of the Caribou U18 hockey team, which is, likewise, the subject of a Member’s statement. I would like to welcome Michael Holden, manager; Cameron Heath, team captain; and all team members to the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also visiting our hon. House today are members of the MUN student biomedical design team, which is the subject of a Ministerial Statement today.

Welcome, everyone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we’ll hear Members’ statements by the hon. Members for the District of St. John’s East - Quidi Vidi, St. John’s West, Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, Waterford Valley, Windsor Lake and, as well, with leave, the Member for the District of Conception Bay South and the Member for the District of St. Barbe - L’Anse aux Meadows.

The hon. the Member for St. John’s East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O’LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise to acknowledge an absolute Newfoundland legend and friend, known fondly far and wide as the Man of a Thousand Songs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. O’LEARY: Ron Hynes has spent a lifetime capturing and authenticating the character and spirit of this province through his music. From his time as founding member of The Wonderful Grand Band to his professional accolades, including an honorary doctorate from Memorial University, JUNO Awards, East Coast Music

Awards, a SOCAN Lifetime Achievement Award and a posthumous induction into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. O'LEARY: – Ron Hynes left behind a songwriting legacy that resonates across generations from this province, across Canada and internationally.

A prolific craftsman, his masterful compositions and profound lyrical narratives continue to influence scores of both emerging and seasoned songwriters alike.

Songs like “Atlantic Blue,” “Godspeed,” “Leaving on the Evening Tide,” the “St. John’s Waltz,” “Back Home on the Island,” “No Change in Me” and the enduring folk classic “Sonny’s Dream,” to name but a few –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. O'LEARY: They remain as enduring as our rugged shorelines.

Ron Hynes’s songs provide the soundtrack to the very fabric of our culture and heritage, offering Newfoundland and Labrador a permanent placement on the world stage. His contributions are immeasurable and truly something to celebrate.

I ask my hon. Members to congratulate the friends and family and to acknowledge Ron Hynes and the incredible contributions he has provided to us as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John’s West.

K. WHITE: Speaker, I rise today to recognize TaDa! Events, founded by Terri Andrews, more than two decades ago.

TaDa! Events has become known for connecting people through music, through laughter and through celebration. It has welcomed renowned artists, supported local talent and given Newfoundlanders and Labradorians opportunities to enjoy world-class entertainment. From intimate performances to major productions, TaDa! Events has consistently understood the power of live events to inspire, to unite and to energize communities.

Beyond entertainment, TaDa! Events has had a lasting contribution on the province’s arts and culture sector. By investing in performances and creating stages for artists, TaDa! Events has helped strengthen the cultural economy while enriching the social life of the province. Live music and events support tourism, hospitality and local business.

Furthermore, through its many shows including the well-known Our Divas, TaDa! Events continues to raise funds and awareness for many charities and causes, while consistently and quietly providing funds, scholarships and support for individuals in need.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating Terri Andrews for her dedication, leadership and commitment to arts and culture in Newfoundland and Labrador. Her efforts have helped create lasting memories and a stronger cultural landscape for the entire province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: That was lovely.

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to celebrate an extraordinary achievement of CoLab AI, a home-grown success story that is showcasing

Newfoundland and Labrador on the global stage.

Just last week, CoLab was named Nasdaq Verafin Tech Company of the Year at the 2026 TechNL industry awards. This honour recognizes their role in tech innovation and their remarkable growth in the engineering software space.

CoLab also recently announced a multi-million-dollar deal and partnership with Bombardier. Under this agreement, CoLab's Engineering OS will use advanced AI to help Bombardier design and manufacture the next generation of world-class business jets. By automatically capturing lessons learned and surfacing expert knowledge in real time, our local tech leaders are helping a global aerospace giant build safer, more efficient aircraft.

From their roots as Memorial University engineering students, to becoming the first Atlantic Canadian company in Y Combinator, CoLab's journey is a testament to the talent in this province. They are proving that you don't need to be in Silicon Valley to lead the AI revolution; you can do it right here in St. John's and, in particular, Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating co-founders Adam Keating and Jeremy Andrews and the entire CoLab team for these monumental achievements.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Speaker, with approval from yourself and the House, I wanted to show the jersey before I read the Member's statement.

Speaker, for the second year in a row, a group of young hockey players from

Newfoundland and Labrador will travel to France and Belgium to honour the memory of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. KORAB: As a member of the Trail of the Caribou U18 hockey team, they are named after the trail, the six monuments erected to commemorate the sacrifices made by the province's young men during World War I.

During this trip, these athletes will walk the Trail of the Caribou to Beaumont-Hamel and participate in exhibition games and tournament play.

The team represents communities and districts from across Newfoundland and Labrador, including Clarenville, Paradise, Mount Pearl North, Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, Embree, Mount Pearl - Southlands, Windsor Lake, Norris Point, Port Saunders and Waterford Valley, a true reflection of the province-wide talent and deep appreciation for our history.

I rise to recognize Waterford Valley constituent, team manager Michael Holden and historian Frank Gogos, and the player: goalie Cole Holloway, forward Cameron Heath, Luke Holden, Ashton Toope, Ryland Maloney, Liam Collins, Nathan Windsor, Lucca Mongiat Kelly, Landon White, Mark Janes; defensemen Carter House, Nicholas Prowse and Nicholas Blackmore.

Please join me in recognizing these outstanding athletes who carry our future forward by holding our past and honouring it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Okay.

There are two questions. First of all, does the Member for Conception Bay South have leave to give a Member's statement?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Oh, I'm sorry. I got ahead of myself.

The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

I was so caught up in the last Member's statement. I apologize.

J. HOGAN: Don't worry, I won't forget, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Devonne Ryan, recipient of the 2025 SportNL Female Coach of the Year award.

As a dedicated coach with Cygnus Gymnastics, Devonne has had a tremendous impact on the lives of countless young athletes through her leadership, mentorship and unwavering commitment to excellence.

Her influence extends far beyond athletic achievement. She helps build confidence, discipline, resilience and character in the young people she coaches, many of whom are proud constituents in Windsor Lake.

Through her patience, professionalism and passion for sport, Devonne has created an environment where athletes are encouraged to challenge themselves, support one another and strive for their very best both in competition and in life.

My own two children, like so many others, have benefited from the incredible coaches at Cygnus who, like Devonne, make a meaningful difference in the lives of young athletes every day through guidance, encouragement and care.

Devonne's dedication to youth development makes her exceptionally deserving of this recognition.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating Devonne Ryan on being named the 2025 SportNL Female Coach of

the Year and in thanking her for her outstanding contribution to sport in our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Again, I apologize to the hon. Member for Windsor Lake. I got ahead of myself there.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South would like to do a Member's statement. Do we have leave of the House for him to do so?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

SPEAKER: Secondly, the Member is going to exceed the 200 words *Standing Orders*, if Members are okay with that, as well.

Leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Okay.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you for that and I thank all Members for that.

Speaker, I rise today to remember and honour the life of Jim O'Toole – a man defined by his unwavering devotion to his family, his community, which happened to be CBS, and the people he served and someone I admired deeply.

Raised in Pasadena, Jim carried with him a deep sense of loyalty and service from an early age. That calling led him from volunteer firefighting to paramedicine and, in 2001, to the St. John's Regional Fire Department, where he truly found his purpose.

For Jim, firefighting was never just a career. It was a responsibility, a calling and a brotherhood he believed in with all his heart.

As a Lieutenant and as President of IAFF Local 1075, he was a tireless advocate for his fellow firefighters, especially those facing the devastating realities of occupational cancer. His leadership and persistence helped secure presumptive cancer coverage, protections that will endure and safeguard firefighters for generations to come.

At the centre of Jim's world was his wife, Crystal, and their sons, Ryan and Gavin. They were his pride, his purpose and his greatest joy. For them, he gave freely of his time at every rink, every field and every sideline, building friendships wherever he went and becoming part of the heartbeat of every team his boys were part of.

Jim answered the bell time and again and, while that bell will now ring without him, his courage, compassion and dedication will live on in every life he protected, every cause he championed and every moment he chose the service above self. Even in his most difficult moments, he put others first – a true measure of his character.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in remembering Jim O'Toole and a legacy marked by service, kindness and unwavering dedication.

Speaker, I think it would be right if I ask all hon. Members to rise with me in a moment of silence in memory of Jim O'Toole.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: Thank you and you may all be seated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Speaker, forest fire season will be in effect on the Island of Newfoundland tomorrow, May 1, and in Labrador on May 15.

During forest fire season, a permit is required to burn vegetation, wood or paper. Burn permits are free and easily accessible and they help ensure outdoor burning occurs safely.

Speaker, we tend to focus on the people, programs and resources we have in place to fight wildfires. We have more wildland firefighters and aerial supports this year, and more resources in place for volunteer fire departments and communities.

But the most important thing to think about during forest fire season is how to prevent wildfires from starting at all.

With spring clean up underway after a long winter, we remind people that burning grass is a dangerous practice.

While burn permits are not required to light campfires on soil, gravel or sand, be sure to check the daily forest fire hazard risk in your area before you burn.

Residents can take simple actions to prevent wildfires, like stacking wood piles away from houses, watering and trimming grass, removing weeds around the yard or ensuring ATVs and power saws are properly equipped with spark arrestors.

Speaker, our government has shown its commitment to supporting wildfire prevention and readiness. *Budget 2026* will invest over \$7 million in new funding for emergency preparedness and \$2.2 million for wildfire prevention and mitigation.

We continue to provide the resources necessary to fight wildfires and I urge everyone in the province to do their part to keep all of us safe.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to join in acknowledging the importance of wildfire prevention. This is an important issue and we all share the goal of keeping our province safe. Encouraging residents to take precautions and raising awareness is absolutely vital. Prevention has to be at the centre of any wildfire strategy.

However, awareness alone is not enough. While the minister points out new funding, residents need clarity on how it will strengthen front-line capacity, especially, in rural communities where resources are already stretched. That means ensuring reliable support for volunteer fire departments, stronger, earlier detection and real preparedness.

This requires more than seasonal reminders. It requires long-term planning and measurable outcomes. We will continue to support efforts that improve prevention and preparedness, but we will also be looking closely to ensure this government's commitments translate into real protection for people on the ground in every district.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

While it's important that we all do our part to prevent wildfires as individuals, we are now witnessing the real effect of climate change and individual efforts, though helpful, won't be enough to save us. That's why we were disheartened yesterday to see funding cuts to Environment, Conservation and Climate Change.

With that in mind, we urge this government to back this new Climate Action Plan with the resources needed to make a meaningful and measurable impact.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It gives me great honour to rise today to recognize the outstanding work of Memorial University's student biomedical engineering design team.

The student biomedical engineering team, known as Memorial Medtech, is the first of its kind at Memorial University. The team travelled to Ontario in March to compete in the True North Biomedical Competition and faced off against universities across Canada.

This competition brings together some of the country's brightest undergraduate students, challenging them to develop innovative solutions to real-world health care and medical technology problems.

The team's Smart Knee Sleeve integrates mechanical, electrical and software components to support patients rehabilitating from ACL injuries, helping them return to sports more quickly and safely.

Speaker, I am excited to say that Memorial Medtech won first place overall.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: The future is bright. I am proud that students from this province competed against universities from across Canada and emerged as leaders.

To the members of Memorial Medtech, you put a spotlight on the excellence in Newfoundland and Labrador. You have demonstrated talent, ingenuity and determination. I encourage every member of your team to continue showing the world just how great you are and what you can achieve.

Congratulations on your remarkable accomplishment and kudos to you for the months of hard work and dedication that made this possible.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I'm delighted to join the minister in celebrating this incredible achievement of Memorial Medtech. Taking first place at the True North Biomedical Competition in Ontario is no small feat. By finishing ahead of the top universities across Canada, these students have proven that Newfoundland and Labrador's talent is truly world-class.

This victory is a brilliant example of innovation, grit and technical excellence, fostered at Memorial University and within the university. These students aren't just the leaders of tomorrow; they are solving real-world problems and challenges right here, right now.

To the members of Memorial Medtech, you have made your province very proud, and we look forward to seeing your continued success here at home and on the national stage.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We congratulate the Medtech design team on this great achievement. It's a reminder of how MUN is such an important driver of innovation, which spurs economic growth right here at home.

However, the grant increase to MUN won't be enough to make up for the losses due to the tuition freeze. We urge government to invest, and the economic driver of that is MUN. We can't afford to do without it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, the Minister of Health stated she cannot continue in a role if medical travel delays persist, even suggesting that affected residents sue the government over transport delays in Labrador. A minister of the government wants people to sue the government – keep in mind she is saying to sue the government for problems that are within their control to fix.

Does the Premier agree with his minister that people should sue his government?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, yesterday, after practically seven years of being in the House of Assembly fighting against problems that actually are leading to the death of people in my district, the challenges that I face, and now, in actual fact, to be taken out of context by media – I just want to read here. I said: I will tell the people out there for Northern Labrador that we are going to address the issues in RT. We are going to address the systemic, chronic issues that is failing the people of Northern Labrador, failing to get them out to their appointments. Just as bad, failing to get them home because the influences –

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

We heard the Minister of Health outline yesterday some issues she has with health care in the province, and again just now.

But can the Premier explain why he isn't able to work with the Minister of Health to fix

the issues she has outlined here today, rather than having her resort to throwing her hands up and advising people of our province to go to court and sue the government?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, yesterday when I spoke, I actually addressed that I am working on solutions, and that we have to be responsible.

As a minister that knows about systemic issues, knows about Indigenous barriers, knows about colonialization and intergenerational harm, I have to do better. I have to hold myself to a higher account, and that's the messaging I was getting after. I wish the media would cover that.

Speaker, after 10 years – 10 years – of erosion of services – and I'm not talking about Medavie. Medavie is stepping up and helping me, working with me. I said that to media; did they record that? No, they didn't.

In actual fact, we are doing a better job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: The Opposition is afraid that what we're going to do is going to change health care. We're going to change health care –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

The personal income tax exemption is being sold as a major affordability measure; however, it will save Newfoundlanders and Labradorians a maximum of \$28 a month. Every dollar counts, but this isn't going far enough.

Why does the Premier think that's enough for people struggling to pay their bills, which have risen by hundreds of dollars not \$20 a month?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, I'm starting to think now that the hon. Member, the Leader of the Official Opposition, needs to have his morning show VOXM recordings recorded and not do it live, because of the misinformation that's shared to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: The –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: The basic reduction amount will put \$91 million a year into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. If used, a little disingenuous to say, well, we've got \$25 a month or \$28 a month – \$91 million or (Inaudible).

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I will tell you, Speaker, here are some facts, and I don't need to talk to VOXM about it because we all know it's true. This budget is taking the sugar tax from zero to zero, the gas tax from 7.5 cents to 7.5 cents, the motor vehicle registration costs from \$80 to \$80. For the record, these are all Liberal policies.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: We're pleased that they are continuing the Liberal affordability measures, but why didn't the Conservatives, and the Finance Minister in particular, recognize the cost-of-living increases in the budget with their own initiatives, especially with oil now at \$126 a barrel?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: The Leader of the Official Opposition on VOXM this morning stated clearly: They've used \$110 million of Liberal initiatives, and he included in that the provincial gas tax reduction which he never had funded in the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

C. PARDY: I know, as Minister of Finance, that there was no funding in the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: In fact –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: In fact, we had to budget and pay for – wait for this, Mr. Speaker – \$500

million of unfunded programs by the previous government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: The Minister of Finance seems to be confused. It's his budget; it's not our budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: But I can tell you, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are telling us they wish it was our budget after what they saw yesterday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: And another thing, the budget does nothing to lower power rates for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, yet the government and the Finance Minister are taking credit for \$45 million to reduce rates. These funds were prepaid by ratepayers and recommended by the PUB for this purpose.

So why is the Finance Minister taking credit for something he didn't fund and that wasn't his initiative?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: The Leader of the Opposition stood many times and talked about levers, but he only talked about one lever in particular. To reduce and take off the provincial portion of the HST on electricity rates in Newfoundland and Labrador would cost \$64 million of the taxpayer money to give relief. Through the basic reduction

amount, we are putting \$91 million into the people's pockets.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Now, which lever would the leader like us to use, the \$91 million or the \$64 million?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, the Conservatives have backtracked on their commitments to early childhood educators. The Association of Early Childhood Educators of NL said: The budget does not address the most pressing issue facing the sector, the workforce. Child Care Now has said: They're not listening to the people who are involved in the sector and the message being sent to them is that educators don't matter.

If children are our most valuable resource, as I've heard in this House, why weren't ECEs recognized in the budget?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I certainly can't speak for the Conservatives; they're a federal party. Either the Member doesn't know better or he's doing it on purpose, but I will speak as a Progressive Conservative here in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Early childhood education in this province is paramount, and we can't have it without the dedicated professional

educators. We need to work with them to come up with solutions moving forward. There are many, many barriers that we face that have been left to us from the previous government.

We're going to work with them to solve these issues and make them the best they can be so our children can succeed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

A progressive government would look at progressive policies for children in our province, and that wasn't in the budget. He can say he's going to work with them, but, as we've said over the last six months, they've told him what they want and what they need to make sure we have good ECEs in this province. As they said, this government is not listening.

The NLTA has said that there are significant gaps in the budget. They're disappointed that there is no increase in allocations for school counsellors, instructional resource teachers, school psychologists, speech language pathologists and other specialized supports; no increase in allocations for school administrators, no meaningful and targeted action to address retention and recruitment of certified teachers.

So why didn't the Minister of Education fight to address these serious issues in the budget?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Let me speak to the preamble. There have been many reports put out by Child Care Now, by the YWCA, and right in their recommendations: Formalize processes to engage sector representatives, including ECEs, operators and associations to help develop policies and compensation.

That's what we're doing. We've established two committees. They also say – their report – that system-building takes time, and we need to get it right – that report.

This report that came out told us that the previous administration didn't get it right.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, if the Minister of Health, a sitting Cabinet minister, does not have faith in her government's ability to address health care issues in Newfoundland and Labrador, how can people around the province have faith in the government?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, not only does the Opposition take my words out of context, but so did the media by clipping things.

In actual fact, I was holding myself to account.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. EVANS: I was holding myself to account. Being aware of those issues, basically, I said that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. EVANS: – we are taking action now to actually –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. EVANS: – fix the problems that have been (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I've had enough.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

L. EVANS: Speaker, I actually was talking about that we have things in the works now to solve the problems that eroded health care services and access for health care services in Northern Labrador and Southern Labrador.

We are taking steps, but, in fact, hold myself to account. If I can't do that, Speaker –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I really try my best not to misquote. I have the copy here, and I do know the recording continued after she thought it was finished and they played it again today.

If the Premier and the minister – the Health Minister and the former long-time CEO of Lab-Grenfell – cannot work together to fix an issue for 3000 people –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: – can half a million Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have faith that the Premier is listening to his Health Minister –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: – on health care issues for all of us?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me be perfectly clear and tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we have one of the best Health Ministers (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: – and I have full confidence in my Minister of Health to deliver better health care for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; something that this government failed to do for the 10 years they were in power.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I appreciate the enthusiasm, but this is Question Period.

The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: I said last night in the media, I said this morning in the media, the Minister of Health knows the issues in Labrador. She knows the issues. The

concern here is when she has to go on the radio and –

K. RUSSELL: (Inaudible.)

L. DEMPSTER: The Member for Lake Melville is just relentless today. I have the floor.

C. PARDY: Times up.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: Very disrespectful, I say to the Finance Minister. Very disrespectful.

SPEAKER: I have on numerous occasions now brought up the issue of decorum, of Members chirping back and forth on either side and so on and it doesn't seem to be getting through. So if we have to start identifying Members by district once again and taking away speaking privileges on either side of this House, I'm going to start doing it.

I know I keep saying it, but I keep giving latitude because I want debate to happen, but this cannot continue. I'm asking for co-operation on both sides of the House.

The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, as I said, the Minister of Health knows the issues in Labrador. I have confidence there, but when she has to go on the radio and say I've asked three times for this to be fixed, where is the Premier in this equation?

Does the Minister of Health really believe the only answer for people to get health care is to sue the department she's in charge of? Answer that to the people, Premier, get on your feet and answer that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, seven years – six over there, one right here. I've spent all seven years looking across at failed Health ministers. This Health Minister is not a failed Health minister. This Premier is fixing the problems that they left behind. They can stand here and make accusations all they want. The mess that she is trying to clean up, which is insurmountable, is left behind by failed Health ministers from those guys.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: Certainly portrayed out there, Speaker, that she has no support in her government to fix health care in this province. It's taken just six months for the Minister of Health to admit defeat, throw up her arms in the air and ask the federal government to take over.

So, Speaker, maybe the Premier or the Government House Leader can answer the question as to why the Health Minister, who is very passionate about issues, have had to give up on her government?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, I'm quoting myself from yesterday: I want to tell the people out there of Northern Labrador we're going to address the issues in RT. We're going to address the systemic, chronic issues that is failing the people of Northern Labrador, failing to get them out to their appointments. Just as bad, failing them to get them home, because that influences whether somebody

will actually go to their appointments in the first place.

Speaker, over there, as Cabinet minister, the Member who just asked me the question actually allowed the Liberals to sign a contract that eroded medevac services to Northern Labrador patients. That's what I'm dealing with, an actual erosion of the medevac contract.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, she's at the highest table in this government and what she did say was "What's the point of even [having] the provincial government manage the health-care system for Northern Labrador?" Six months in, I'm sorry that she's having to go through that with her government –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: – and Labradorians are listening, Speaker. The budget cut the Air Access Pilot Program –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member to take her seat, please.

L. DEMPSTER: Oh, I'm sorry.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville need not speak anymore today. You will not be recognized.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

The budget cuts the Air Access Pilot Program for Labrador and the Northern Peninsula. They've cut it from almost \$6 million a year down to just \$2.7 million.

How can the minister – quote – improving transportation to and from Labrador with less than half the money? Their blue book said, we're going to scrape the Liberal air access program and we're going to do better, well half is not better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Actually, Speaker, that Air Access Program was thrown together, basically limiting people to two subsidized tickets. That does not address the high cost of travel. In actual fact, there was such low uptake, because it was so poorly organized and it was hard to access. You had to book a month in advance. It was poorly accessed. So actually the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. EVANS: The \$2.7 million is more reflective, Speaker, but what we're going to do is we're going to actually address the high cost of travel so we can bring travel down for everyone, not just for two tickets a year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

The Minister of Education talks proudly about how they're Progressive

Conservatives. Well, I'll ask that hon. Member why they went and brought Pierre Poilievre's right-wing man down from Ottawa, who is by far a reformist, to come and lead them to an election and pay them out of the House of Assembly funding.

Anyway, the executive director of Violence Prevention Avalon East says she was very disappointed that there was no mention of ankle monitoring throughout the budget, and that there's no mention of resources allocated to it.

Given the ongoing concerns around public safety and repeat offenders, why is there no funding or mention of ankle monitoring in this year's budget?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm going to address the preamble, and perhaps if they had hired Mr. Outhouse, they may have had a better chance at winning.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: The people of Newfoundland and Labrador decided who they wanted on this side of the House, and guess what? It was us.

We won; they lost. Even their party donors donating hundreds of thousands of dollars to get pay-for-play still couldn't drag them across the line. So when the previous minister stands on her feet and wants to address that stuff, she should probably look back in time, as they always used to do when they sat over here, and recognize what they've done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Shameful, Speaker. They wouldn't allow the minister to get up, who is actually very competent and very able to get up and answer the question about ankle monitoring.

So what message does it send to communities around Newfoundland and Labrador expecting strong tools to monitor high-risk individuals? Can we hear from the minister? She's quite able to answer the question.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for her confidence in me as Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say electronic monitoring for individuals that are out on bail is an important tool that we are assessing.

I can say, Speaker, that we have been meeting with important groups throughout the province with respect to this issue. I have had meetings with violence prevention groups, and I can say that this is something that we are assessing. We are going to be looking at studies and feasibility studies, as well, going forward.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

It's funny, the minister and, of course, the Member for Harbour Main, when she was on this side of the House, she shouted loud and clear that it took political will to make this happen. She called to make this happen. She is now in a position in make it happen if her premier will support her to make this happen for the women and girls in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. PARSONS: The Minister of Justice has confirmed there are no sheriff's officers in the budget. Given recent trial delays, and we know that these are intimate partner violence trials caused by lack of sheriff's officers, why was the minister satisfied with this omission?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, with respect to the sheriff's officers, I am pleased to say that I have met with NAPE to discuss this important issue. In fact, we are scheduled to meet with them again. We are looking at this because this is a priority.

There is no question that there are recruitment and retention issues with the sheriff's officers. There are a number of vacancies, however, so that has to be the focus of any plan going forward, it's on recruitment rather than increasing the number of sheriff's officer positions at this time. We are looking at that focus first, recruitment, and that is where our priority is at this point.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, I am glad that the minister is talking to NAPE. She should have her Premier listen to NAPE and implement their recommendations, because if we could take advice from NAPE –

SPEAKER: Please address the Chair, I say to the hon. Member.

P. PARSONS: – we should see the changes that we do need.

The Minister of Justice has also confirmed that she has no authority to reopen an RCMP detachment in Grand Bank, yet this was promised on the campaign trail –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. PARSONS: – by the Conservatives.

Why did the government promise something that they knew they did not have the authority and power to deliver?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, it has become clear today I think, when we look at the questions in the House, the Opposition seems to have a very insidious way of taking our words out of context.

Mr. Speaker, I can advise that, with respect to the RCMP detachment, I know very clearly what we can and cannot do. We are able to look at the operations of the police. We work with them, but we cannot direct RCMP or RNC to put resources anywhere in particular. We work with them; we consult with them, but it is their role and responsibility to direct that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

During the debate on the Future Fund, the Finance Minister said – quote – his goal is that we would have a cash surplus in our term, yet his budget yesterday forecasted deficit in the next number of years.

Why did he say one thing in the House when he knew he was not able to deliver it in the budget?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, we feel very optimistic about our future, and I think Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I think the Member may have missed that we are scheduled to lead the country with a 5.5 per cent GDP this coming year.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: Second place in Canada is PEI with 2 per cent.

We know that we've got a great demand on our resources. We feel optimistic that we're going to have a bump in revenue, and we do feel confident, Mr. Speaker, that we will turn around the situation that the previous government gave us to –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

C. PARDY: – deal with. We will do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Speaker.

There's a \$1.5-million cut to the tourism budget.

I ask the Minister of Tourism, it's specifically for strategic product development, how does cutting funding help make us the tourism capital of Canada?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Arts; and Sport, Recreation and Parks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. BARBOUR: I would like to thank the Member opposite for the question.

It's a great question. I have the answer right here. I'm going to break this down: Marble Mountain, the capital budget changes from year to year depending on its needs; Vision 2026 was a one-time \$500,000; and also the sports centre, the dome, is not being built so we're saving \$600,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

A. BARBOUR: So the budget never really changed, we just don't have to give that money out, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

Both the minister and Premier have touted their plan to make our province the tourism capital of Canada, yet we see no investment

or increase in the budget for the artists who play a key role in that industry.

At a time when affordability is top of mind, artists are struggling to make ends meet, and they need work to survive, not just words of support.

I ask the minister: What do you say to the artists in this province who were hopeful for real investment not the status quo?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Arts; and Sport, Recreation and Parks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. BARBOUR: I would like to thank the Member opposite for the question. It's a great question.

As the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Arts, and Recreation, Speaker, I would like to acknowledge all of the artists here in the room today from music, arts and heritage and even sports. They're all here in the room and thank you for the Members opposite for bringing them in.

I'm an artist myself, and I value art. Artists are valued in our province. I love art, and I always will. I love Newfoundland and Labrador, and I'm here for all of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Speaker, the Arts and Culture Centres across the province, but especially here in St. John's, are in dire need of maintenance. For years governments have let this vital public infrastructure deteriorate leaving workers to manage unsafe, difficult conditions and closures, and patrons questioning when these historic spaces will be properly cared for.

The minister agreed with me in Estimates that there isn't enough money to address the maintenance, so I ask him: Will his department develop a plan to keep these essential public arts buildings?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I'm glad the Opposition said was a good question.

Me and the Member did speak about this in Estimates this morning. It's called preventative maintenance and there has never been a great job done on it by government, all governments, but this government over here, the Opposition, they were in power for the last 10 years. They think it's a great question; maybe they should have done some repairs with the Arts and Culture Centre while they were in power. We wouldn't be talking about this today.

But, to her question, I agree. We have got to do better on preventative maintenance. The Arts and Culture Centres are very important to the people of this province. I told her this morning, and I'll tell the House, I'm committed to finding ways that we can make improvements to the centres any time we can find the money.

Right now, we're dealing with HVAC issues, we're dealing with contractors, we'll get to the bottom of it and they will be better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It was announced in the media that there is no additional funding for Horizons at 106,

and that the lease will expire at the end of December.

Now, while I do not mourn the end of an expensive, politically motivated lease, I support the model and I'm deeply concerned about the residents and the staff who support them. We have a housing crisis.

I ask the minister: Where will the residents go and is this why there is more money in the budget for emergency housing shelters?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being, and Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

He's not the only one who cares about the people at 106 Horizons.

I can certainly say that *Budget 2026* has funding for 106 Horizons to December 31 of this year, and we have been clear that 106 Horizons was a temporary solution. It was announced last August that the former administration made plans to find another solution for that location.

It's my understanding from discussions with my team that there have been some successes from that location, but maybe a blended housing model will be more effective.

Let me be clear, Speaker, we have a plan in place. We will leave nobody behind.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Dunn House, with the University Health Network in Toronto, is one model that we could be adopting here, maybe a lot less expensive as well.

Speaker, the current government announced \$28.9 million in funding to hire an additional 94 teachers and 20 TLAs. In Budget 2025, the former government announced funding to add 400 educational resources to the K-12 system and still ended up with well over 150 vacancies. There's growing reliance on retired teachers to make the educational system function. We have a recruitment and retention problem which won't be solved until the underlying obstacles are addressed.

I ask the minister: What action is he planning to take to address the partial teaching positions, class composition and class sizes, violence in the classroom, online harassment and the lack of housing in remote areas?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for the question.

Moving forward, we have money in the budget. In fact, it's the biggest budget next to health care, \$1.5 billion. We've opened a dialogue with the president of the NLTA; we'll continue to do that. We have the safety coalition in place. I look at the latest release from the president of the NLTA, it talks about: "Education is a social determinant of health and the foundation of economic success." I cannot agree with that more. That is what we're working towards.

In this, as well, NLTA mentions that they're committed to working with all parties going forward and that's what we're going to do to make the education system much better.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has also expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, with pleasure, I give notice that I will move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution relating to the raising of loans by this province, Bill 15.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motion?

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

C. PARDY: Speaker, it's my pleasure to present the second motion.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000, Bill 16.

SPEAKER: Okay.

Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Arts, and Sport, Recreation and Parks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. BARBOUR: First, I would make a point to clarify on my Ministerial Statement that was made on Tuesday, April 28, celebrating the success of ParksNL.

Newfoundland and Labrador is the home of 32 provincial parks throughout the province, including 13 camping parks. In my statement, I misspoke and I said three, when in fact I meant 13.

I have a second part to this. The Opposition stated the first online booking system for peak reservations was in 2015 by the Liberal government. A second point of clarification, the online reservation system for provincial parks was first implemented in 2007 by the PC government

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. BARBOUR: And in April 2015, the online booking system was implemented by the PC government, again, not the Liberals, as it was previously communicated by the Opposition.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition is for the paving and upgrading of a road between Lord's Cove and Lamaline. The reasons and background for this petition are as follows:

WHEREAS the highway from Lord's Cove to Lamaline is in a deplorable condition; and

WHEREAS emergency vehicles and school buses travel this road; and

WHEREAS the residents of this area need to use this roadway to access medical services, shopping, banking and employment; and

WHEREAS the road is causing damages to vehicles;

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide the necessary funding for the paving of this road between Lord's Cove and Lamaline.

Speaker, once again, I get up and I do another petition on the roads in my district. I'm very concerned about this section of highway due to safety issues. This section is Phase 2 of roadwork that we begun, and was designated for completion this season. This road is used to access medical services, shopping and employment by the residents in that region and those communities. The section of road between Lord's Cove and Lamaline is also used as a transportation route to get the students to school.

Last week, when I was visiting with this community and they wanted to talk to me about the roads, there was a lady present at the meeting. Her child is afraid to travel on the school bus so she now has to bring her child back and forth. The reason for that is the child can't sit properly on the bus and is sometimes jolted from her seat.

I know that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure is passionate and

unequivocally concerned about the safety, especially of our children. So I would ask him, again, as I did for the other roads in my district that I've been talking about, if he can have his engineers or officials check out the condition of these roads that I've been talking about in my district with a view to necessary repairs and paving required.

That's all I ask.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for a response to the petition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I sit in the House everyday and I hear petition after petition after petition from the Members opposite, who less than six months ago were on this side, six months now, I guess, they were on this side of the House. They had control of everything and we seen that day-in, day-out, week-in, week-out, year-in, year-out. I hear everyday, they're getting up and several of them over there are harping about the state of the roads.

I don't question the state of the roads. I feel bad for the residents of the districts that have the roads in such a state, but I guess my question to the House and the people who maybe watching: What were they at for the last 10 years? The roads in all their districts are in such a horrendous state, yet when they were here, they never did nothing about it.

So I guess my question is back at them: What did you do for the last 10 years? Because I'm going to look after roads, but it's a long list. I'm wondering what they did with the last 10 years when they controlled all the budgets. They controlled the roadwork and they were very generous to

their own districts, so I question that, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This petition is not written by me, the number of signatures on it are not my signature. These are coming from the mayors, the town of Milltown, Head of Bay d'Espoir, put a lot of work into these signatures. So it is a serious issue and hopefully the minister will respond to this petition. It is roadwork for Bay d'Espoir.

WHEREAS the recent announced Roads Plan by government features a decrease in funding of \$66 million from last year's Roads Plan; and

WHEREAS there are many communities in Bay d'Espoir, District of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, that are in desperate need of roadwork repair; and

WHEREAS the current Roads Plan does not address these needs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. LOVELESS: THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to address the road deficiencies through Bay d'Espoir to ensure safety is put first for the travellers of its road.

Mr. Speaker, I presented a petition last week that the Town of St. Albans worked very hard to get 400 signatures from residents and, not only from residents, from businesses and the paramedic is housed out of St. Albans and presented that last

week. I thank them for that, but this petition is from Milltown, Head of Bay d'Espoir and that's for work in and around these towns including Morrisville as well.

So it is serious, a lot of traffic in and around those areas, as I said, school buses and ambulances. The fire department has certainly pleaded with me to present this. There are names here that are with the fire department and people in the general public as well and seniors who travel this road because they go over the road.

I say to the Member for Exploits, if he wants to talk about this, he can, because Route 360, which was in his district, I paved because his buddies had cabins there, but do you know what they told me? You'll do it because we know our Member will never get it done.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Transportation, sincerely on behalf of the people of Milltown, Head of Bay d'Espoir –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. LOVELESS: – this petition is on behalf of them, that he reconsider and, hopefully, find some money to do some needed work on those roadways this coming season because there are contractors in the area that would probably present an opportunity for this to be done.

So, hopefully, the minister will reconsider. He's gotten a lot of emails from the district and I know he respects those. I had a chat with him about it. So, hopefully, he will reconsider and, at some point, invest a few extra dollars to address those major, major concerns on a few kilometres of those roadways.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for a response to the petition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Here we go again, Speaker. I wasn't going to get up to that one either but he begged me to stand up and respond. So here I am.

You got a call coming in, I think. Somebody got a call. It's not me. I think that might be the Member opposite calling me.

The people in this community – I'll always respect any person in this province who wants a safe road to drive on. I agree with them 100 per cent and we'll do our best over time to get it done.

The Member, maybe, should offer an apology to the people he represents because of his failings as the minister of this department that I'm minister of now, to stand up six months later and say how all these roads are unpaved and the state of his roads. It's shameful for a Member to sit in this seat less than six months ago and to get up now telling us today, we got all these problems.

As a matter of fact, for clarity, too, the poor mouth we're hearing across the way with the lack of roads he's gotten –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: – \$35 million worth of roadwork the man put in his district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, \$35 million.

I told the Member in Estimates today I will look after the people of this province who

need their roads paved. We'll do it when we get to it. We've got a four-year plan. We'll get there, but the Member to get up after six months of leaving office and lecture me about his roads and expect people to look after him.

You'll be looked after but we've got a lot of roads to look after first.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I have a petition here to protect injured workers' livelihoods.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm trying to hear the Member for St. John's Centre. I've already taken away the speaking privileges from one Member. Do we want to go for two?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

SPEAKER: Because that's where we're going.

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

J. DINN: As long as it's not me yet, Speaker.

These are the reasons for the petition:

Workers' Compensation is designed to help employees make up for lost income as a result of injury on the job.

While in most other provinces workers can receive up to 90 per cent of their former

income from Workers' Compensation, this province only pays out to a maximum of 85 per cent.

WorkplaceNL currently has the financial stability to offer 90 per cent.

Any person could one day find themselves unable to work due to an injury on the job.

Injured workers, despite lost income, still have the same household budget, the same mortgage, the same bills to pay as before they were hurt with no means to make up the gap.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to increase the income replacement rate to 90 per cent for injured workers through WorkplaceNL.

Speaker, this is not a major increase, but it would be a helpful increase. We also know that the percentage of the replacement is up to a maximum so those with certain incomes that exceed that maximum are really financially disadvantaged.

In the end, I would say that work or employment is the largest part of a person's identity. There is a desire to get back to the job and to have that routine, that meaningful part of their lives. But they shouldn't have to feel that they have to go back before they're well enough to take on their duties.

This is a matter of respect. We've heard it already from a number of unions that there still needs to be more of an emphasis on the people who perform the work. Whether that's the early childhood educators who need the pensions and other things taken care of to attract them, it's about basically making sure that people can afford to live, especially when they're injured and cannot work.

So, Speaker, I submit this petition and hope that government, especially if they're coming into a surplus, will look at maybe

helping out the injured workers who want to be part of the economy.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Orders of the Day.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

So for anyone watching, yesterday was budget day and the Minister of Finance delivered his budget. Today, I'm the Finance critic for the Official Opposition, so I will be delivering a budget response, I guess, from the Official Opposition.

So it is a privilege to be here on behalf of the people of Mount Scio. For anyone else watching, normally we do 20 minutes back and forth, and we'll do that after this, but as the first response to the government's budget, I believe I get three hours and 30 minutes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: We'll see how long this takes. There's a lot to talk about and I believe we could go until 5:30, so we'll see today –

AN HON. MEMBER: Should we get a podium (inaudible)?

S. STOODLEY: I don't need a podium; I need a workout.

AN HON. MEMBER: Give her water.

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

Thank you anyone who's watching and for joining us today. It's a privilege to speak on behalf of the Official Opposition to this year's budget on behalf of the people of Mount Scio who I've had the privilege of representing since 2019.

Deputy Speaker, I guess I firstly want to thank all the public servants. I want to thank all the public servants who did a significant amount of work behind the scenes that led to this budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: In most cases, those were the same public servants that did all the work for our budget as well. I do want to thank them.

I want to thank the health care workers across Newfoundland and Labrador, who have gone through one of the biggest adjustments of their career this week, I would say, in the launch of our Liberal government's \$450 million health care transformation in CorCare.

In speaking with constituents over the weekend, I think things were a little bit slower – maybe a lot slower in some instances – but, obviously, when there's a change, especially in a significant IT system, especially in a hospital or the urgent care centre or an emergency room – ideally, there's no disruption. I just want to

thank and commend all the health care workers who were working and are working and continuing to evolve and learn with the new health care system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: I want to thank the IT people who work in NLHS and OCIO who have been working for two years, as well as many staff within the health care system who were pulled out as superusers. They received special training. We had a lot, a lot, a lot of people receive expert training on the Epic system. I know all the IT teams have been working, pretty much straight, for two years, on the transformation.

So far I think – well, for myself, as a consumer of the health care system, I've been impressed from the technology perspective. I have the app on my phone. I have the app on my watch. Just today, while we were here, I got a notification on my watch because I have an appointment next week. It seems very seamless from a technology perspective, and in my experience today. I just want to give a shout-out to all the OCIO and NLHS technology teams who've been working very hard for two years on this.

They've also done a seamless transition with MyGovNL. The day of the launch, I think, my experience was MyGovNL was down for maybe 24 hours with the health but, after that, it was right back up with MyChart. So I just want to thank them.

I also want to thank the staff at the King's Printer. I was formerly minister of the department responsible for the King's Printer, and I know that those teams likely stayed up all through the night printing all the budget documents for us, printing all the budget documents for the lock in. A significant effort from the King's Printer staff in making sure that all the documents are pristine and well executed, as the government intended them to be, from a production, printing perspective. So I do

want to thank and give a shout-out to the King's Printer who every year go above and beyond to produce the budget documents of the government.

Speaker, I do want to start off by saying that we have just come through a significant change in leadership in Newfoundland and Labrador. I just want to assure everyone who's watching, reading and who will come across our budget response – I know all of my colleagues, you know, we're still digesting the budget. It was only yesterday. It's a very long document. There are lots of documents there. There are the Estimates, and we've only just started Estimates.

Yesterday, last night, there was Justice and Public Safety; this morning there was Transportation and Infrastructure, and we will have weeks of Estimates where we all get together and we ask line by line, from the public servants and from the minister, what's going on from a policy perspective, as well as from the numbers, and we hear from a mix of the ministers and from the public servants.

I just want to assure anyone whose watching, anyone who comes across a social media post or a question that we're answering in Question Period, I know the Conservative government won the election, but I just want to assure everyone watching that no party is working harder to win your trust back than our party.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Our goal is to win back their trust, and we are going to do that with every question in Question Period, in Estimates, every email that we respond to, every phone call that we return and every door that we knock on. We are going to make sure that when the next election comes, there's no question who you want to lead Newfoundland and Labrador. We are at their heels; don't you worry, Deputy Speaker.

In this past election, there were a lot of promises. The Liberal Party, my party, we had promises in the election. I know the NDP made their election promises, and the PC Party made their promises. When these promises were made, the government's fiscal forecast came out in August and the anticipated deficit was released, and then it was a month and a half after that that the election platforms came out and a deficit much higher than at budget time was due to lower oil prices and, during the summer and the wildfires, I know that my government, our government, we spent a lot of money fighting those fires.

I don't think anyone would disagree with the extra funds we spent bringing in helicopters, bringing in extra equipment. It was really no expense spared to save property and lives in Newfoundland and Labrador during that fire. So that led to a significant amount of the deficit in the summer, but all the parties had that information when they came up with their election promises, Speaker.

We know that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians voted for the PC party, but only 1 per cent extra voted for them than voted for our Liberal party. Now, they won, fair and square, but I do want to highlight that they received 1 per cent more vote, and we are going to be working hard every day to win back the trust of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians so that next time there's an election, whenever it may be, there's no choice about who they should vote for.

I also think it's really important to note that the blue book is now the official mandate of the government. They could have done mandate letters for all the ministers. When I was a minister, the premier had a mandate letter for my department, and my deputy had my mandate letter on his desk every day all day. That was the guiding principle of my deputy's job every day, my mandate letter. Whenever there were conflicting priorities, whenever there were numerous things going on, my ministerial mandate letter was my deputy minister's priority.

So the Conservative government now, they adopted the blue book as the government mandate, so it's a bit that introduces one layer of, kind of, uncertainty and, I would say, uneasiness for the public service, Speaker. I do question how seriously they expect the public service to take them when they're already going against their own government mandate.

The Future Fund, Speaker, in the blue book said they were going to get rid of it. Now I have to say, as the Official Opposition and as a taxpayer and a mother and a person, I really hope the Future Fund stays and I hope we invest more in it, as I've said in this House over the past week, but they promised to get rid of it and now it's here. The deputy ministers have the blue book on their desk and that is the guiding principle for this government so, already, there is kind of: Do we do it or do we not do it?

What direction do the deputy ministers have on their desk to guide the province; I'm not sure. There are no mandate letters. I would encourage the government to give their teams relevant, accurate mandate letters because I would argue, at the moment, they do not have that.

So we heard the budget yesterday from the Minister of Finance, I ask Newfoundlanders and Labradorians: Has this Conservative government delivered to you what they promised in the election, when they knocked on your door and convinced you to vote for them? Do you feel as though they are respecting your vote? Are they acting in a way you would expect them to act? Does this budget respect and align with your expectations when you voted for them?

In the general public, people ask different questions about being an elected official and the way I describe it to people is, when I knock on someone's door, I have a conversation with them, we have a social contract between myself and the voter. They hold me to account – I've impressed the Member for Corner Brook. But I do I

have a social contract with the voters, many of whom voted for me and some who don't.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: I will get to the helmets, thank you. That is in my speech and I look forward to talking about that. Thank you very much. I look forward to talking about helmets. Thank you so much for reminding me.

I do have a section in my speech here today about helmets, so thank you. I'd be very honoured and pleased to remind everyone how we're saving the lives of children and families across Newfoundland and Labrador and how we will not apologize for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, when I knock on someone's door, I have a social contract with them. They hold me to account, they ask me questions, they challenge me, I challenge them. I work hard for them. They're my boss and so I think about if you have to live and when you go back to knock on their door, they hold you to account.

So I ask Newfoundlanders and Labradorians: When your PC Member comes and knocks on your door, how do you feel your social contract with them is? What are you going to say to them next time and are you happy with the job that they are doing? Are you happy with this budget that they sold you in October and they've now delivered yesterday? Are you happy with that, Speaker?

I still have three hours and 22 minutes left.

Speaker, I heard a radio host this morning say that they've been hearing that this is a very underwhelming budget. I would agree with that characterization, Speaker.

This government has failed to deliver a budget that meaningfully addresses the affordability and health care challenges

facing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The public had very high expectations and the government made many, many promises. The 2026 budget offers little tangible relief for the rising cost of living or immediate improvements to the health care system.

We know this was a very challenging winter. We had a lot of snow. I ask you, anyone watching, were you satisfied with the 24-hour snow clearing that the Conservative government promised? You promised something, fine. Then they said that they delivered. They said promise made, promise kept – 24-hour snow clearing. Then they accused the public of having too-high expectations around snow clearing.

So they say 24-hour snow clearing, then they say they delivered on their promise and then they say everyone's expectations were too high.

I would encourage you, public, to keep a sticky note by your door. Next time when they go door to door, when your PC Member comes door to door, you can ask them about having too-high expectations for 24-hour snow clearing and how they delivered on their promise.

I ask you, the public, or this House: Are you satisfied with how they're working towards safer communities? They promised in the blue book, the official government mandate, that they would make your community feel more secure. I ask you: Do you feel like this government is working towards making you feel more secure? These aren't my words. They're their words.

Does this budget move the needle at all in making you feel more secure? I absolutely do not think so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. STOODLEY: I love the participation here today, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER (Dwyer): Order, please!

I want to hear the speaker.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

The government promised lower taxes and so I ask Newfoundlanders and Labradorians: When you filed your income taxes – or if you haven't yet, you should – six months after they were elected, did you benefit from the lower taxes that they promised?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

S. STOODLEY: No, in your income taxes that you just filed, no one in Newfoundland and Labrador benefited from the tax. We could have changed the tax in the fall. We would have come in in December for two days, three days and voted to change the *Revenue Administration Act* to reduce any of the taxes. We committed that publicly and we didn't do that. So the public did not experience a reduction in their taxes in the year that they just filed their taxes.

The Conservatives have continued the affordability measures introduced by the Liberal government such as the Home Heating Supplement, the gas tax, the elimination of the sugar tax, the reduction in motor registration costs. They did increase the personal exemption, which will save the average Newfoundlander and Labradorian up to \$28 a month.

We heard in Question Period today, the Minister of Finance say, I think it was disingenuous is the word he used, maybe, to describe that. That is completely factual. If you take that times 12, that is the number that their government said. So it is completely not disingenuous at all. It is completely factual and accurate to take the yearly number and divide it by the number

of months and to say that the average Newfoundland and Labradorian will save up to \$28 a month, Speaker.

They did reduce the small business tax by 0.5 per cent, yes, and now a small business who gets \$100,000 in profit in a year, they will save \$500 a year. I'll just say that again because I just want to make sure that's clear. So a small business who makes \$100,000 in profit, they will save \$500 a year from a 0.5 per cent reduction in the business tax in the budget yesterday.

AN HON. MEMBER: What's wrong with that?

S. STOODLEY: There's nothing. I'm saying that's what you did. Our Liberal government also reduced the small business tax by 0.5 per cent in 2024. Yeah, we did. We reduced the small business tax, Minister Coady as Minister of Finance, reduced the small business tax by 0.5 per cent in 2024.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: I can't help but think that I know Newfoundlanders and Labradorians would have loved to have a similar amount saved on their heat and light bill, on their electricity bill, Speaker, that we were promising in the election.

So I ask Newfoundlanders and Labradorians again: Does this meet your expectation of what you expected when the Members knocked on your door, asked for your vote and told you they were going to lower taxes, safer communities and better health care?

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

S. STOODLEY: No.

So I ask rotational workers, they were offered a tax break in the government mandate. It promises a rotational worker tax break. No, not in this budget, no. So, sorry, if you're a rotational worker, this

government did not give you the tax break that they promised in their mandate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, I know that the Members are upset and don't like hearing that, but they're in the room. They're in Cabinet; they decide what the government's budget is.

I've heard the Members say it's about choices. I've heard them say it's about priorities. They promised a rotational worker tax credit and I'm sure many Members, if not all Members over there in the government, would've used that door to door when they went into the election. They say, oh, you're a rotational worker. Well, we're going to do a rotational worker tax credit.

It's not in this budget.

AN HON. MEMBER: Maybe another budget.

S. STOODLEY: Maybe next year, maybe the year after. It's not in this budget.

AN HON. MEMBER: Possibly.

S. STOODLEY: Possibly, maybe. I think we've heard that a lot.

So a lot of the taxes are the same. They reduced the sugar tax from zero to zero and they kept the gas tax the same. I do want to say, Speaker, the government ridiculed and said incorrect statements in this House and on social media about our amendment to further reduce gas tax, and they voted against lowering the gas tax. They voted against our amendment to lower gas prices, to keep taxes the same, for all of us.

In the budget, we heard rhetoric around the sugar tax and how we were driving up food prices. I ask anyone watching, have you saved money at the grocery store from the PCs recent elimination of the sugar tax?

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

S. STOODLEY: No, because the sugar tax was taken off last spring under Premier Hogan.

The Conservative government said that they were doing a review of all the fees and charges, but that wouldn't be done before the budget. No, they couldn't do that before the budget.

Did you think you were getting additional relief? Did Newfoundlanders and Labradorians think that we were getting relief for fees and charges?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I need to hear the presenter.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I would say the way I've heard the government talk about these fees was that there are outrageous and shocking. I haven't heard one fee that was outrageous or shocking, or that they were going to cut them.

So we look forward to hearing about their review of taxes and fees. That hasn't yet happened. It certainly wasn't in their budget. Crickets, Speaker.

I do want to highlight – this is incredibly interesting – they are investing in a reduction of your electricity bills. Are they? There was \$45 million in a savings account that is already ratepayers' money. They already paid that.

The Conservative government put it in their election platform –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: Yes, give it back, that's the right thing to do, but don't pretend like it's a government investment. It's the money your constituents have already paid to Newfoundland Hydro.

Speaker, I want to give a similar example. Let's say you're in a coffee pool. One of the jobs I was in before we had a coffee pool, a water pool, and we all paid in so much a month and someone organized coffee because coffee was not provided by my employer. We all shared in a coffee pool and then, at some point, someone decided we ran out of all the money in the coffee pool and then we would all pay another \$20 or \$50 for the coffee pool for the year or six months.

I feel like this is like a coffee pool and there was extra money at the end and instead of giving it back, they just bought more coffee, fine, or they give it back, but the employer didn't provide that. The employer didn't give them their money back. The employer wouldn't say oh, we're giving you money back. It's like the money they've already put in the coffee pool – this is ratepayers' money they've already paid.

You can't be in a coffee pool, pay into a coffee pool and then there's extra money left and then the employer says oh, by the way, I just gave \$100 to your coffee pool. No, the employer didn't. It's their own money in the coffee pool. It's ratepayers' own money in this account that is there for this purpose. Yes, you should give it back, but it's not your money. It's ratepayers' money. It's your constituents' money. This is just so interesting.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Or paying high-priced political people out of MCP funds.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So I'd like to turn to some very important health care points today. The Premier of the province was a former health executive in Central Health. I know from the mandate to the government – quote – Tony Wakeham's vision is to make sure everyone gets the right care, at the right time, without having to pay extra.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

You can't use the Premier's name.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, I apologize. I withdraw. I was reading a quote, but okay.

Insert the Premier's name – vision is to make sure everyone gets the right –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'll ask the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave to stop chirping, please.

P. PARSONS: And how about every other Member?

You can't just call me out. That's not fair. That's bullying.

SPEAKER: The Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave has no more speaking privileges for today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. KORAB: Point of order.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Just a point of order, Speaker, and I believe it's section 49. The speaker from across who has lost their speaking privileges, so be it. Then when one of our Members gets their speaking privileges

revoked, we're clapping. Like, is that what we're doing here?

SPEAKER: I don't see the point of order because we do bang on desks and clap. But, in the meantime, I do appreciate where you're coming from. I would ask the Member – I didn't see who clapped, so I can't say for sure who clapped.

J. KORAB: We've just got to do better.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Yeah, thank you very much. Taken under advisement.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to talk about health care. I'd like to get quote. Insert the Premier's name in the quote – their vision is to make sure everyone gets the right care, at the right time, without having to pay extra. He will not leave rural Newfoundland and Labrador behind, but instead will make sure every resident of this province has access to health care when they need it. That's very noble vision and quote.

I don't think anyone could deliver on that fully in six months, that's not realistic – or seven months – but I ask the public, do you really feel like this government is working towards meeting that promise or meeting that expectation? Are they working towards that? What have they done to make health care more accessible? Have they told us what a plan is? Have they told us what levers they're pulling? No.

Yesterday, the Minister of Health was clearly very frustrated and indicated that she may have to resign as minister and she suggested that residents find a good lawyer and sue her. So, I would say, Speaker, that is very good indication of how good the Conservative plan is for rural health care in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would say the government are continuing many Liberal programs, such as making nurse practitioner services free for medically necessary care. They are continuing the Janeway rehabilitation, the emergency room expansion and the cardiac care improvements. The budget provided \$3.3 million to provide 24-hour care for Botwood and to expand at Whitbourne, which is great, but how are they going to find the staffing? They asked that of us: How are you going to find the staffing? But they seem to have all the answers now.

When are these going to open? Have the MRI machines been ordered? I was going deep on that yesterday, Speaker, in my research. One of my constituents had an MRI a month ago and they don't have the results yet. So they had an MRI but, still, a month later, and there are no results. The radiologist report is not done yet. Who's going to staff all the MRI machines? We're going to need tens or hundreds of radiologists to read all the MRI reports from all the MRI machines the government are going to get. Are those in the budget?

What about the technologists? For two MRI machines, I was reading that you need three to four MRI technologists per shift. So that's like 12 to 13 MRI technologists at least to operate two MRI machines. Then we need a team in Labrador to run the MRI machine in Labrador that they promised.

So where do we get MRI technologists? CNA has an MRI technologist diploma program and that takes three years. We don't have tens of MRI technologists hanging around and the government would have known this. If there was a Cabinet paper with a budget announcement, this is something that would have been in a Cabinet paper to talk about: Oh, well, you can't just deliver an MRI machine and then have MRIs in four months. It just doesn't work like that. You need staff.

The CNA MRI diploma is three years. So let's say they expand the CNA MRI

technician program, or even if they make the tuition free or they pay people to go do that program, it's going to be four to five years before those MRI technologists are working in the health care system. We'll be back in government then, that's great. I just don't see how this can work.

Then, by the time you actually buy an MRI machine – so when you click buy or the purchase order goes out and the MRI machine is enroute, it takes six to 12 months by the time it arrives. You have to set it up and you have to configure it and you have to install it. You have to set up all the technology. That is a year-long process. I wonder, have the MRI machines been ordered? Are they going to be ordered closer to the time when the workers are available, because it's going to take you four to five years to get all the workers, so are you going to wait three years to order the machines? That sounds sensible, but I don't see how this is a realistic thing. You don't just snap your fingers and get MRI machines and deliver more MRIs to people.

I do also want to highlight the nurse practitioners. I'm glad that they're progressing with the pilot program that we initiated, and I do want to be very clear that we fully support the RNU. We need to grow the availability of nurse practitioners helping Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at no cost to residents across Newfoundland and Labrador. The government was very bullish on that, and it's time for them to put their money where their mouth is. This was not in the budget, as the government has promised and talked about many times. It is very underwhelming.

How many times did I hear about them committing to a national pharmacare program that lowers the cost of prescription drugs and diabetes supplies? Maybe I missed that in the budget. How many times during the election did I hear the party opposite talk about pharmacare and how they were going to get it all done, or did I

miss that in the budget? Maybe I missed that announcement; I'm confused.

The Conservatives also walked back their major election promise to provide 100 per cent coverage for essential medical travel. They did add more money, but the scope, timing and funding is limited and exactly the same people who were eligible under our Liberal government are the same ones who are eligible, because they're not changing the eligibility, they're adding some more money to the pot. I don't think that that's what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador voted for.

I do want to say, you know, if this budget is not good enough for the Minister of Health, why should it be good enough for Labradorians and Newfoundlanders?

Then the government promised free parking; did I miss that in the budget?

AN HON. MEMBER: Nope, we're still paying.

S. STOODLEY: No? Should I advise my constituents to keep their parking receipts when they park?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes, send them along.

S. STOODLEY: Yes. All right, maybe I'll suggest that they keep their parking receipts and send them to the government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. STOODLEY: I do have to say, one of the things, as an elected official, you don't always know what your constituents – well it is my job to know, but sometimes things are more important to people than you realize. I have to say the St. Clare's redevelopment is that for me, Speaker.

When the government announced that they were no longer doing the new tertiary care hospital and that they were going to redevelop St. Clare's, the amount of

feedback that I received, I did not expect. That was something that really gets under people's skin that I did not correctly anticipate how much they cared. In my experience now, since that announcement – I think it was in December – it is super, super clear to me that the public does not want the government to spend any money redeveloping St. Clare's.

But they're doubling down on it. I read that the government committed to consulting with health care unions before making a decision on St. Clare's, but now it's in the budget. I wonder if they did consult with the unions before putting it in the budget? Did the unions agree that government should be redeveloping St. Clare's? Do the union members agree that government should be redeveloping St. Clare's? Like, that's just wild and one that I did not anticipate, how strongly people feel about St. Clare's, that the government should not be investing in St. Clare's.

I saw a quote from the governing party that says: always listen and consult with front-line health care workers and their unions. Nurse technicians, therapists and front-line staff have first-hand knowledge of what our health care system needs. That sounds sensible but I'm reminded of the story of a political staffer who was hired for \$275,000 for 18 hours a week. They're getting a bonus and there's no requirement, there is nothing they have to do to earn that bonus. It's just a bonus in the contract.

Then NAPE said, in response to that, that they offered to the Premier to have their front-line staff provide government with advice, and that NAPE would be happy to pay the bill. So they're not even taking their own advice. They're not even attempting to take their own advice.

Then, when you put a few of these things together, we have a medical doctor giving political advice to the Premier, not being paid out of the Premier's political advice budget – it's wild – and then giving advice

on health care, sure, but giving advice on other things like fishery and mining. Then the Minister of Health thinks that people should sue her. So I don't understand; we have all these high-paid people and if this –

AN HON. MEMBER: Part time.

S. STOODLEY: Part-time political advisors. If they're worthy of such a high salary dollar, like can we ask them to help fix health? I don't understand.

AN HON. MEMBER: Paid parking.

S. STOODLEY: And paid parking. Like, the day after the election, I don't know why anyone had to pay for parking. That is not a complicated policy initiative and, as I understand it, there was significant work already done on free parking.

I'd like to now move to early childhood education – incredibly important, Speaker. I will start by saying I have a five-year-old. I was fortunate to get regulated early childhood education when my child was three and four. So one day, my child was three and they were getting a bit angry. They put out their hand and they started blowing. I was like, what are you doing?

Then I realized this is some kind of breathing exercise that my three-year-old is doing when they're angry. I was like, I didn't teach him that. I didn't learn breathing techniques like that as a child. Then I realized, it kind of clicked, that my three-year-old learned this kind of breathing technique at his daycare. The early childhood educators, who are very well trained, they're not babysitting. They are teaching our children skills like anger management, like social-emotional skills and how to play with each other and really important skills that I feel like the general population should have more of. There are people that come to mind in this House that I wish also had experience with breathing exercises.

Speaker, \$10-a-day child care – I was extremely proud to be part of the Furey government when we introduced \$25-a-day child care, and we lowered this then to \$10 a day. Extremely proud. We know that education and early childhood education is a provincial responsibility and I'm glad to see in the budget that the government are continuing with the \$10-a-day child care, but they're not expanding it.

If the federal government wants to give us money towards this provincial responsibility, that's great. I think we should take anything the federal government wants to give us. Otherwise, it is the provincial government's responsibility, which is exactly what we did when we created 11,000 \$10-a-day child care spaces. Families of 11,000 children had hundreds and thousands of extra dollars to go towards food, their electric bills, rent and kids' activities. I am extremely proud to be a part of a government that did that. Again, I mentioned I benefited from that program for two years when my child was three and four.

Early childhood educators in Newfoundland and Labrador have been very clear and precise about what they want. They want pensions, paid sick leave and wage grid increases. The government promised pensions and paid sick leave in their blue book, which is now the government mandate. I know, likely, the deputy minister of Education has the mandate on their desk and they know that the government promised pensions and paid sick leave.

They created a committee and early childhood educators were not mentioned in the budget. There was a mention of more infrastructure that would allow for four more spaces, but nothing for early childhood educators.

I do want to say that when you look at the Early Childhood Education Wage Grid – so if you go to the Department of Education website and you look at the wage grid, I believe it's 2023 to 2026 wage grid. It's

listed in the top of that. That was the plan. This was the three-year wage grid and there has to be another wage grid on top of that, after 2026. That was the 2023 to 2026 wage grid. The government now has to do the next wage grid. We didn't hear anything about that in the budget. We don't know what that means for early childhood educators.

Early childhood educators aren't getting the increase in the personal exemption, and that would be \$20 a month, and that's four cartons of milk. The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador said: "However, the budget does not address the most pressing issue facing the sector: the Early Childhood Educator (ECE) workforce.

"Without investments in wages and access to pensions, and paid sick leave, recruitment and retention challenges will continue. Expanding child care spaces without supporting the educators needed to staff them is not sustainable."

When I was in government, I shared MHA responsibility for the Town of Paradise, along with the now Minister of Education. How many town halls did the Minister of Education hold when he was in Opposition, specifically about early childhood education? Two, three, four, 10? Now he's in charge. He's a vocal critic. He's in charge now and I ask early childhood educators, are you happy with this government if you voted for them? Are you happy with what you voted for? Are you getting what you paid for? I don't think there are any question of the answer to that question.

I'd like to move to K-to-12 education. I guess, firstly, I'd like to thank the teachers and support staff in our province who work in our schools and work for the Department of Education.

I grew up in a family of teachers. My parents were both teachers; two of my four grandparents were teachers; one of my

parents-in-law was a teacher; and my aunt is a teacher. So growing up around the breakfast and supper table, my parents talked about the lives of teachers. They talked about disciplining children. They talked about parents, all those things that you hear about at the supper table and the breakfast table from your parents. All we talked about in my house was education, was their lives as teachers.

My mom was a Grade 3 French Immersion teacher and my dad was a vice-principal of a high school. We listened to the radio in the morning while we ate our breakfast. Whenever the minister of Education was on the radio or the president of the NLTA, we had to stop and listen. That was the day before social media or VOXM.com.

So you couldn't go on the VOXM website to see what the stories of the day were. We had to stop talking and listen to the radio whenever the minister of Education or the president of the NLTA was on.

It is highly likely that the Member next to me was on the radio talking. So I'm very proud of the work that our government did on K-to-12 education. We introduced full-day kindergarten. We added significant supports in schools. During COVID –

AN HON. MEMBER: Four hundred teachers.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, I'm getting to that, 400 teachers. Thank you.

We added extra administrative and guidance staff during COVID-19. Then when COVID-19 was over, we prioritized keeping those extra staff in the schools, and I'm very proud to say that they're still there today.

I was very proud that we introduced new schools in Cartwright, Kenmount Terrace, Paradise and Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. In our 2025 budget, we announced more than 400 educators and learning assistants.

Then the government did – good for them – put some numbers in the budget for teachers and I do have the numbers here. But then 20 teaching and learning assistants, I heard someone say, that's not very much, where are they going to go? The government promised to reduce class sizes. We haven't heard anything about that in the budget. Extra teachers are good, but what's the plan?

So don't take my word for it. The NLTA says that there are – quote – significant gaps. The rare disappointment that there no – sorry, the "rare" is probably a typo of mine; I was typing this very late last night. Disappointed that there is no increase in allocations for school counsellors and structural resource teachers, school psychologists, speech language pathologists or other specialized supports. No meaningful and targeted action to address retention and recruitment of certified teachers. So I don't think it's the last time we'll hear about education and K-to-12, Speaker.

I'd like to talk about Memorial on the theme of universities, and I still have two hours and 50 minutes left.

AN HON. MEMBER: Wow, that's excellent.

S. STOODLEY: I know.

I might as well tell you that I was a proud alumni of Memorial. I did my Bachelor of Commerce, graduated in 2008.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

My Master of Arts and political science, I graduated in 2011. I was president of the Commerce class of 2008 and I was vice-president of Bowater House. I was the business faculty rep on the MUN Students' Union. I was an elected alumni on the Board of Regents of Memorial University.

AN HON. MEMBER: So a good background.

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

I had many jobs at Memorial University and then, after I graduated, I also received a fellowship, the TD Insurance Meloche Monnex Fellowships in Advancement, which I was fortunate enough to do while staying at Memorial University.

I think Memorial has a very unique relationship with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador as opposed to universities and their provinces. Memorial gets a relatively large amount of money from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador compared to the comparable universities in Atlantic Canada. But, on the other hand, we know that Memorial has a special significance to this province and to the people and future generations of our province.

So I will tell a story, since I have so much time – I'm going to have a drink first. It's a good story. My grandfather attended Memorial on Parade Street before it was a university. My grandfather grew up in Grand Bank, part of a large family, and they had nothing. My grandfather was very resourceful, and they used to sell rocks to the ships in Grand Bank as ballast. That's what he says, so I have to believe him.

My grandfather was the youngest or second youngest of a very large family and he worked very hard. One day, he went to work and he didn't have a job anymore. So he was, like, what? They were, like, go home, Roy, you don't work here anymore. My grandfather was very upset and said, well, why not? I've been working really hard. He said: Well, no, your older brother Max quit for you this morning. My grandfather lost it.

Then he went home and he was going to give it to his older brother Max. Max said: No, here's \$500. I booked you a plane ticket and I paid for your first year at Memorial. He

said: You're going on the train to Memorial. Someone in this family has to go to university – sorry, I don't mean to cry about that. But someone in this family has to go to university, and so my grandfather then packed up and went to St. John's and took that \$500 and then he became a principal. He was, for 20 years, the principal of GFA High in Grand Falls-Windsor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: So that's my story about –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Oh, I didn't hear that, sorry. I didn't hear that, Speaker, but that's okay.

Memorial has a special place for me and my family, but we know that there's a tricky relationship with Memorial and the government. A lot of times it depends on the personalities of the leaders. It depends on what their ambitions are. Sometimes they have different visions for what Memorial University should be.

But the university has independent and academic freedom and that's, I know, a tricky relationship that the university has to navigate. If it lost its academic freedom, there are a lot of credentials it would lose. So being an independent university and having academic freedom is something that's extremely important to universities and extremely important to Memorial University.

It's very simple and very complicated at once with the government's relationship with Memorial and maintaining that balance of Memorial has a special place in Newfoundland and Labrador; Memorial is the only university in Newfoundland and Labrador; Memorial gets a significant amount of funding from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; Memorial has to have academic freedom; and all those things have to exist at the same time.

So the government made very strong election promises as far as Memorial University is concerned. They said they were going to require it to be financially responsible and "we will not allow MUN to balance its books on the backs of students." I was thinking about that, what does that actually mean? They also use the same phrase when they say that they're not going to balance the budget off the backs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That sounds like something, but when you think about it, what does that actually mean? It doesn't actually say anything.

They also promised to "immediately launch a review of tuition and fees at Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic, including their provincial student loans and grant programs." That is very specific. In the now government mandate, it says to "immediately launch a review" I mean, maybe they did it; they haven't announced it. Maybe they did; it wasn't in the budget. Maybe I missed the news release, but it does say "immediately." It doesn't say we're going to think about it. It doesn't say we're going to consult on it. It says they are going to immediately do this and it says one of three times in the blue book that they use the word "immediately."

I guess we look forward to that immediate review of tuition and fees at Memorial and the College of the North Atlantic. If they don't want to do that, that's fine. It goes back to my argument that, without clear direction from the government to the public service, what do they do? There's no guiding principal document that they can use to execute the work of the government.

The budget handouts says that there's \$500 million to continue to support Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic. This investment includes support for a tuition freeze. I assume that that means they're giving Memorial money to compensate for the tuition freeze – maybe not and maybe my interpretation of that is

not correct, but I look forward to learning more about that.

The Budget Speech says that “the freeze will only lifted when we have confidence from all leaders across the sector that the system is back on track.” What I assume that means is that the government is going to continue to provide post-secondary institutions with extra money to maintain a tuition freeze until the system is back on track.

Again, that sounds kind of impressive, but what does that actually mean? Like, it's not a bus schedule. It's a university trying to balance their special place in Newfoundland and Labrador, academic freedom, the federal government deciding how many international students they can get. You know, it's kind of a very tricky system.

Again, the College of the North Atlantic is complicated and unique because that is kind of a public college that is heavily funded by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. It doesn't necessarily make decisions based on what is most profitable or what can keep them in business. They make decisions based on government policy and decisions.

What does it even mean for Memorial to be back on track? It's interesting that the government is going to continue funding Memorial University until it gets back on track. So you've given it no targets and then you're going to keep funding it while it's doing this work to get back on track. It just doesn't make sense to me, Speaker.

I do want to have a bit of a chat about Labrador. Actually, maybe I'll save that for when the MHA for Labrador is back in the House.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the speaker not to advise of anybody's attendance in the House, please.

S. STOODLEY: I apologize, my mistake. I withdraw that, if that's okay. Thank you, Speaker. I shouldn't have done that.

I would like to pivot to the MOU. So I understand today – it might have happened already but the government will get the report of their review committee on the MOU. Whether or not the government releases it today, I'm not sure. I think it's important to remind everyone watching that, last January, we spoke about the MOU for four days and nights. The governing party, the Conservative Party, were given hundreds of thousands of dollars to hire experts to give them advice, whatever advice they wanted.

We had Newfoundland Hydro, Power Advisory, J.P. Morgan, as well as the internal negotiating team, in chairs right here, and tables. They asked all the questions we had for them. I don't think we turned away any questions. No, we didn't turn away any questions. Lots of opportunity to ask lots of questions from global experts.

At the end of those four days, we were here until 9 at night. At one point, I did the math on how many Question Periods that equals and it was like 40-something Question Periods. Essentially, we had four full days of asking experts and the minister questions about the MOU. Like, unheard of access to ask questions and grill, especially in this House.

At the end of the four days, with their own experts, their own money to hire whatever independent experts they wanted to advise them as a party on the MOU – which I do think is important because it is very complicated – we stood here to make a decision and they walked out. They didn't make a decision. Your government could not make a decision whether or not to vote yes or no for the MOU, and now they want to have a referendum. They want you to make a decision. They couldn't make a decision, as your elected representative, but they want you to make a decision.

I understand they budgeted \$8 million for a referendum. They want Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to decide something that they, themselves, could not make a decision on, even though they're duly elected to represent their constituents in this Legislature, and they were given extra money and all the opportunity and time and access they needed to get the answers that they needed.

I don't recall a point of privilege saying that they need more money to hire more experts. We didn't have to shut things down. We didn't invoke closure. They had full access to ask the questions they needed to ask from the experts on the MOU. They didn't ask for extra days. They didn't ask for extra – nothing and they could not make a decision and they are now going to expect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to make a decision. It's just wild.

I know the mayor of Lab City and former MHA of this House warns that the pause in negotiations on the Upper Churchill MOU is already affecting both development and investment in that region. Communities in Labrador know they are on the cusp of incredible economic opportunity and growth.

So I ask Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, anyone watching, is this what you voted for, a government that can't make a decision?

AN HON. MEMBER: And \$5 billion in investment waiting for Lab West.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, thank you, I understand there was \$5 billion in investment waiting for Lab West.

I hope today that the report comes back saying that we should move forward. If they can get a better deal, great, but there's no indication that they're negotiating. There's no indication that there's a better deal, or we haven't heard any specific concerns from the government on terms of the MOU.

The negotiating team didn't know whether they were negotiating or not. It's just wild.

I'm going to go to Justice and Public Safety for a little bit. A pillar of the Conservative government's election platform, which they stood at your door and asked you to vote for them for, was safer communities. So we've heard the budget now. This is one of their three or four budgets they'll get during their mandate. The first budget, I would argue there were very high expectations around this budget.

We have seen courts close across Newfoundland and Labrador. I don't really have a good handle on all the closures, but I have constituents who have been unable to access the justice, even that they pay for. I have had constituents who paid for something to happen, like a sheriff to go to someone's house, and then it's like four months later before that actually happens, after I have to go to the deputy minister of Justice. The justice system in some parts has just halted.

AN HON. MEMBER: Port aux Basques.

S. STOODLEY: In Port aux Basques.

So I ask you, as the general public, is this what you pay for?

The government announced new Crown attorneys. I understand that the Liberal Party, the Liberal government, we had announced 18 Crown attorneys over three years with six, six and six. So I wonder did the government announce our Crown attorneys? Are these more Crown attorneys on top of the Crown attorneys that we had already announced? I don't understand.

In the budget there's no extra money for funding the Sheriff's Office. I understand from people who know more than I do about the court system that the Sheriff's Office is part of the root of some of the challenges the court system has faced, but there's no

additional funding for the Sheriff's Office in the Estimates.

So I ask Newfoundlanders and Labradorians: Do you feel like this government is making you feel safer in your community as they've promised you? I don't know how; there's very little action or planning or anything.

Speaker, when we look at communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, the government committed to creating 10,000 new homes in Newfoundland and Labrador over five years. That's very ambitious. I commend them if they're able to achieve that. You know, if we look at the budget, where is that? It's not there. When you look at social housing, they did announce \$31.1 million over three years for social housing. That's just over \$10 million a year for social housing; that's not very many units.

This week there was an announcement at Kelly's Brook Apartments in my district, and I was trying to think to myself, like what could they be announcing at Kelly's Brook Apartments? On one hand I was thinking, are they going to buy the building? It's already full of people. They announced 500 extra Newfoundland and Labrador Housing subsidies, which is good, but I don't see how they're moving towards 10,000 new homes created in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're still waiting.

They said they're going to rejuvenate rural Newfoundland and Labrador. They've made a lot of promises. They're going to have a region-by-region approach to growing and developing Newfoundland and Labrador. So I look to the Member sitting behind me, I wouldn't even begin to understand the situation like the Member for –

AN HON. MEMBER: Burgeo - La Poile.

S. STOODLEY: Burgeo - La Poile – thank you – but is that why they cancelled the process for the community-led ecological reserve on the West Coast?

The community themselves took an initiative – controversial at face value, but I understand it's significantly more nuisance than that – instead of talking, instead of engaging, instead following an established process and receiving feedback, they cancelled it, as is their prerogative, but they didn't let it proceed through the process. So on one hand, they're saying: Oh, we're going to a region-by-region approach to growing and developing Newfoundland and Labrador, but then, we've just seen on the West Coast, a community-led initiative to increase economic development, to help the environment and they just cancel it and won't even let it go through the process.

So what message does that send to rural Newfoundland and Labrador? I'm not sure. They just shut down initiatives that are not politically convenient for the government. That is not supporting rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Speaker.

I spoke with some individuals who took the budget announcement yesterday as they're going to re-establish RED boards, the regional economic development boards. Is that the solution for economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador? I think we need to hear more about that. Is it the same as what used to be the RED boards? Is it different? We don't know anything about that, and I think those are very important questions.

A lot of people have spent a lot of time opining about the regional economic development boards. I personally have sat through hours of presentations from leading academic experts in Newfoundland and Labrador about regional economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm looking forward to hearing the government's plan, but I think there's a lot of confusion about is it the RED boards or is it something else? We don't know yet.

Hopefully, while we're debating the budget, we'll be able to hear from the governing

Members about what their plan is, because the budget was very unclear about that.

We also see, when you're going through the Estimates – and, again, we will do a line-by-line review of each department – we notice that there's \$4 million less in the Special Assistance Grants. We need to hear more about that. Are the Special Assistance Grants cut by \$4 million? What would municipalities think of that?

I still can't get over the fact, Speaker, that they're going to replace the ferries, and that was noted in the Budget Speech as well. They're going to create a modern, reliable ferry service, and they're going to build them here. You know, that's kind of a wild. I still can't believe they're going to build ferries in Newfoundland and Labrador. Are they going to use the drydock to build the ferries?

The fishery – I was on the radio this morning and the radio host asked me about the fishery. Actually, over the last two days when I was drafting this, I got to the end and I was like, oh, my goodness, where's the fishery? I can't have the fishery last. The fishery is so important to Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: So then I look up in the Budget Speech, and there's a little tiny paragraph about the fishery towards the end. Fishery is not my area of expertise, but I'm fortunate to have colleagues that know the fisheries inside and out. I was thinking about what was in the budget for the fisheries, and there wasn't very much.

They do announce \$2.3 million for continued investment for seafood marketing supports, sure. For anyone watching, continued investment means it was already in the budget. It's already there and they're going to keep doing it. Fine; that's great. I'm glad they're going to keep \$2.3 million for seafood marketing supports. I understand

that's less than what was there last year. We'll learn more about that in Estimates, but that's all that was there for fisheries in the budget. Are there no other problems in fisheries that the government plans to achieve? I'm not sure.

I hope when we hear from the Minister of Fisheries during this budget process. He can enlighten us as to his government's ambitious plans for the fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador, because I've missed it so far.

I would next like to move to the tech sector, an area very close to my heart. I previously worked in the tech sector and I was on the techNL board on behalf of my employer before politics. We were worried, and I heard worry from the industry about when the government took technology out of one of the department names. There was a bit of a panic. What's going to happen to the tech sector? For a while no one knew what was happening, and I believe now it's under the Minister of jobs, growth and skills – if I've referred to that department correctly.

AN HON. MEMBER: You are correct.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

If we look at the government's mandate, they promised to create an office to support intellectual property, but that wasn't in the budget. They also promised to make Newfoundland and Labrador a world leader in ocean technology again, which is a bit of an insult to anyone who works in the ocean technology sector. To say that they're going to make Newfoundland and Labrador a world leader in ocean technology again is insulting anyone who works in ocean technology, because it is, in fact, one of the key sectors in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our tech sector is worth over \$1.8 billion and ocean technology is one of the primary drivers of that industry worth over hundreds of millions of dollars. There's Oceans Advance, the Ocean Supercluster and over

40 per cent of the research at Memorial University is related to ocean technology, and most of that is industry driven.

While I'm sure the government played a part in that, I do have to say I'm insulted on behalf of the very strong and thriving ocean technology industry that the governing party is claiming that they're going to make Newfoundland a world leader in ocean technology again. I mean, wildly out to lunch. Newfoundland and Labrador is a world leader in ocean technology.

So the Budget Speech, when talking about defence – and I do want to say defence is a significant opportunity for our province. The federal government are making significant increases in the amount of money they're investing in defence. I know a lot of the industries are looking at how can they get a bigger piece of the federal government's defence pie, as we significantly increase the percentage of our GDP that we spend on defence, as the prime minister has promised.

I noticed in the Budget Speech, they do recognize the importance of defence and that Newfoundland and Labrador has world-class marine expertise, with a cutting edge research ecosystem and experience in cold water operations. This is true, Speaker.

So why does the government mandate letter say that they're going to make Newfoundland and Labrador a world leader in ocean technology again? I think they should have really had a serious look at it. Then to take that document, now, so we have the Future Fund that's changing, we have this that's not accurate – things are adding up, which is now the government mandate, the more uncertainty for the public servants who are executing the direction of the government, more uncertainty about what they should or should not be delivering.

I would recommend the government Members tour the Marine Institute, for

example, to set the record straight on our ocean technology sector in Newfoundland and Labrador. Whoever wrote the blue book, whoever inputted it in the blue book, whoever reviewed the blue book, obviously is not very close with the Marine Institute and all of the incredible research and work that happens, and Newfoundland and Labrador is a leader in ocean technology.

I also have to note that not one thing that the tech sector asked for was in this budget – not one thing techNL asked for. The tech sector asked for faster, clearer and more predictable funding – made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador innovation procurement funding and government response processes, greater supports for commercial execution and funding programs. Not a single mention in the government's Budget Speech.

The only reference to technology in the entire speech is under defence and it says "we will have a vibrant innovation and tech sector with leading experience in dual-use technologies." Yes, for defence but we also have a billion-dollar tech industry, \$1.8 billion technology industry in Newfoundland and Labrador and we've heard in this House today about some companies leading the way in technology in Newfoundland and Labrador. So I hope the government is not forgetting about the tech sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'd also like to talk about tourism. The government claims – excellent – that they want to make Newfoundland and Labrador the tourism capital of Canada. The tourism strategy line estimates \$1.5 million less than last year, and we heard from the minister a little bit about that in Question Period and we'll ask more questions about that in Estimates.

The tourism industry is incredibly important in Newfoundland and Labrador. We even heard concerns from tourism stakeholders when I spoke about my colleague and the concerns about the West Coast and the

community-driven conservation area that the government cancelled without due process, without following any of their process, that also impacted tourism significantly. We saw many tourism stakeholders come out against that decision. The government, so far, does not have a very good track record in making Newfoundland and Labrador the tourism capital of Canada.

The government promised reliable year-round flights to Europe and expanding regional and national connections. They promised to reduce the cost to travel to and from within Labrador, and none of that was in the budget. I'm not sure when they're planning on delivering what they promised.

For anyone watching or anyone who works in the tourism industry, I ask you, in all seriousness, anyone in the tourist industry, how do you feel about this government and tourism? Do you feel like they are moving in the right direction? Have a reflection on that.

I'd like to talk about defence for a bit, and I did reference defence. I'm going to circle back to defence. It's an incredible opportunity for Newfoundland and Labrador, with the global conflicts that are happening, the prime minister has committed, I think, to doubling if not tripling the amount of money they're spending on defence – up to \$10 billion. I know, right now, there's an open call for companies to put forward defence projects. Newfoundland and Labrador does need to up its game in terms of the defence opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The blue book and the Budget Speech does say that they're going all out on defence, which is excellent but, honestly, they don't even know what's going on in our ocean technology sector. How confident can we be that they're going to be effective in going all out on defence?

They committed to building a drydock – that's great – with \$200 million from

Equinor. I chatted with industry experts about that. So the drydock, they have to plan it. They have to build it. What work is going to happen at the drydock? Is there a 20- or 40-year Coast Guard maintenance contract for the drydock? Has Equinor lined up work for the drydock?

Experts in this industry tell me it would be completely irresponsible to build a drydock and then hope and see what happens. You have to build it to the scope. You have to build it to a contract. It has to be built to spec. You have to build the drydock with a customer in mind, with the ships in mind.

I ask the government, who is your customer? How do you know what to build? Otherwise, you're going to build it too small or too big or not fit for purpose. That's what industry experts told me. Who's going to operate the drydock? Is TI going to operate the drydock? Who is paying for the extra funds to build the drydock at some point in the future?

So \$200 million from Equinor, great, but Newfoundland and Labrador taxpayers – and then if you have a long-term, lucrative contract, if this government comes and says, okay, we have a 40-year contract with the Coast Guard to maintain these six ships – great – you build a dry dock for those six ships. That's what industry tells me, that that would make sense. Anything less than that is just wildly irresponsible. I ask the government, is there a lucrative contract for the dry dock that you're planning? If you do, that's great. If you don't, then what are you doing?

I also want to circle back to an element close to my heart, which is red tape. This one is very interesting. So the CFIB wants – and they're always vocal about provinces and red tape. Fair enough, I understand that. The CFIB have criteria that they want provinces to meet in order to get a certain grade on their checklist, and that's fine.

The CIFB wants provinces to have a red tape reduction office. I personally disagree with that, and that's fine. The government is doing that, and that was in their Budget Speech. They're going to have a red tape reduction office. I fought against that, and I'll stand by that any day of the week. I disagree. I think it is ridiculous to make government bigger, to hire more public servants to count the number of rules that you have, and that's what the CFIB wants.

The government, in their Budget Speech, said they're going to have a red tape reduction office. I think it's silly to make government bigger to focus on red tape. That's what your government is doing. That was what we heard yesterday in the Budget Speech. They are going to add more public servants. They are going to make government bigger to have a red tape reduction office.

I'm not saying the government is perfect. I'm not saying there are not programs and services that could be streamlined, but enough to warrant an office, enough to hire more staff for red tape, it's just silly in my opinion.

The CFIB, in their report card for provinces, they take a number of different things into consideration. I have looked at this with a fine-tooth comb when I was in Service NL. Red tape is incredibly important and every decision that we made, we looked at how it affected businesses, especially from a technology perspective and making things easier and faster for businesses, that was incredibly important.

I did go through the CFIB report with a fine-tooth comb. Part of what they do in their methodology is they take all the laws and regulations and they divide it by the number of people in the province. That's how they get a significant weight of red tape score and that percentage changes each year.

Newfoundland and Labrador has the second lowest number of regulations and

laws in all of Canada, second to PEI, but we always get a really bad grade because our population is 500,000. Ontario has, like, 10 times the number of laws and regulations that we have but, because they have so many people, when you do that simple division, Ontario comes out on top, and we come out really poor. So if the CFIB maintains their way of ranking provinces, we are never going to get anywhere in terms of their red tape report card measure.

I know that this government said that they were going to focus on getting a better red tape grade. I recently, in the last few months, received information from the CFIB about red tape, and if you look in the chart of provinces, I think it's very interesting that – the first time ever – the CFIB are not giving Newfoundland and Labrador a grade on their report card this year. They say they're not because there's a transition in government – fair, fine – but if you look at all the past years, and the last 10 years, I think, are listed in the CFIB overview, every government in Canada would have changed at least twice or there would have been an election.

Certainly, governments changed over the last 10 years, and this is the only space in the last 10 years in the CFIB chart of provinces and their red tape report card that there is no ranking, that the CFIB have said they will not give a province a grading this year for this government. I think that that's very interesting, they will not be getting a grade from the CFIB, and this is the first time in 10 years that they're not giving a province a grade. I think that's extremely interesting.

I bet – I assume that the CFIB will also change the waiting criteria before the next year. We will see. I'll stand in this House, and I'll tell everyone how the rating criteria has changed.

I'm going to circle to Labrador for a little bit.

L. DEMPSTER: Oh, beautiful. (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

I have to say Labrador is not an area of expertise for me, personally. I've been there three or four times. I dated a guy from Labrador, and I went to Lab City a few times with him; and I think the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and I, we're related on both sides of our family. So I'm sure we have roots somewhere there.

L. DEMPSTER: I know she dated someone from Labrador.

S. STOODLEY: I dated someone from Labrador. I went to Labrador a few times with them.

I do have to say, the MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair makes sure that Labrador is in the forefront of every discussion that we had as a Cabinet and every discussion we have as a caucus. The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair is always front and centre, making sure that we understand the impact for Labrador and offering solutions that will help the people of Labrador, Speaker.

I do want to note that the government promised to reduce the cost to travel to and from and within Labrador, but they also decreased the budget for the Labrador Air Access Program from \$2.5 million – I think I wrote the numbers down – they decreased it to \$2.7 million.

B. DAVIS: That's right, yes.

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

They also committed to electrifying Labrador West, but I missed the plan there. I don't think that was in the Budget Speech. We know that Labrador City – and I already mentioned a quote from the mayor of Labrador City – where they're eagerly awaiting Churchill Falls and the improvements from Churchill Falls and the economic drivers and all that will bring to

the community of Labrador City, they're paused, waiting for movement on the MOU.

So I understand, today, the government is going to get the report from their committee. The Minister of Energy already told this House that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador gave them direction that they didn't want the \$225-billion Churchill Falls deal. You said that in the House. So that is some of the only commentary that we've heard from the government, whether or not they agree or disagree with the Churchill Falls deal.

We know, and I've mentioned, how we were all here and we had four full days of debate. There was no limit to the number of questions. I didn't hear anything about needing more money or more time or more resources or anything to get to a decision, and so I, our party, our former government, we urged the Conservative government to move forward with this deal.

While I talk about Labrador, I also want to make a reference that Goose Bay needs power too. Growth cannot occur in Labrador West and Goose Bay without significant development for this project.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, the mines can't grow.

S. STOODLEY: Yeah, the mines can't grow, the government can't get extra tax revenue and they can't get extra non-renewable resource investment without a project like the MOU, the Churchill Falls project.

The government says they're going to develop Gull Island, but we have no idea how, when, with who or who's going to pay for it. I have to say, I was talking about this yesterday to someone who didn't really know much about the MOU; because, a lot of people don't know very much about it, I have to say.

My favourite part of the MOU and the whole deal – and I said this at the doors when I

was speaking with residents of Mount Scio – is the fact that Hydro-Québec was going to build Gull Island. They're going to pay for it. They're 100 per cent responsible for all the cost overruns, and we'd own 60 per cent of it. Like, that is like a dream. I don't know how we could do better than that, honestly.

We don't have access to the capital to borrow, nor should we even if we had access to it. I don't think it's prudent and responsible for us, a province of 500,000 people with a deficit and the debt that we have, because we do have to take that in consideration, to borrow tens or more billions of dollars to develop something, to do it on our own. We know that the past hasn't shown us that that works for Newfoundland and Labrador.

AN HON. MEMBER: Well, how were you going to build the hospital?

S. STOODLEY: So that's a good point. I have two hours left and I'm happy to pivot and respond to things that come up in this House. The Member opposite talked about the hospital. That would have been in my district and I'm happy to talk about that.

The Health Accord promised a new tertiary – or recommended a new tertiary hospital in Newfoundland and Labrador. There's a lot of land there. It is strategically located between St. John's and Paradise and Mount Pearl and all the Avalon. It is right there near the highway; right there at Kenmount Road and, I have to say and I've mentioned this before when I talked about St. Clare's – I still can't believe they're doubling down on St. Clare's. I try and pride myself on understanding what's important to my constituents but, I have to admit, I underestimated the outrage from the public when they found out and when they understand that the government is going to invest more in St. Clare's.

I know, and I've already mentioned this, the government said they're going to consult with the unions. Okay. I wonder if the union

members and the unions agree with investing in St. Clare's? We need a new, modern hospital.

I completely reject, I completely disagree that the Members opposite throw out these numbers. One minute it's \$7 billion, one minute it's \$10 billion and they say \$14 billion. I've heard higher numbers. As a Member of that Cabinet, we never got to a place where there was a final plan. We were looking at options –

L. DEMPSTER: We were going to build it in phases.

L. STOODLEY: We were going to build in phases. We were still deciding on options.

I can hear the Members opposite laugh. That's fine and it's their prerogative.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. STOODLEY: We were still looking at exactly what the plan was going to be. We were thinking about options. I don't know why that's funny.

L. DEMPSTER: We knew the need was there.

S. STOODLEY: The need for a new hospital was certainly there.

So while I talk about that, I will say, the people of my district in Paradise and Kenmount Terrace were incredibly impacted by the government's decision to cancel that. I hope we get back in 3½ years and sign the Churchill Falls deal and then we can, hopefully, put that back on the right track.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: They're going to develop Gull Island. We have no idea how, when, with who or who's going to pay for it. They included Bay du Nord in the fiscal forecast in the early years, despite the fact that the project hasn't been sanctioned, but they

made a point not to include any revenues from Churchill Falls, Gull Island or other projects. Does that mean they've given up on those projects?

Because a lot of this is not political. The tobacco settlement, for an example, that is not a political decision of how that money gets treated by the accountants. The minister does not tell the accountants how to put money in the fiscal forecast. The accountants have professional standards. If they make incorrect decisions, if they make irresponsible decisions, they could lose their status as a Chartered Professional Accountant or as another financial CFA or CPA. I think there's only one now, but whatever that designation is. There is a professional standard.

As an MHA – I should write the Legislative Library – I tried to get access to the account, the Public Sector Accounting Standards, but it's \$600 to buy the standards. You can't just access the standards. I would like to prove to the public that they were not treated in a politically motivated way. Just as if the two lawyers can give you different legal opinions, perhaps two accountants can give you different ways of treating this.

I would like to go back to the original Public Sector Accounting Standards, but unfortunately it's like \$600 to download them on the website. I am going to follow up with the library about that to see if there's any way that I, personally, or this House, can have access to those standards to understand what it says about how to treat that type of money.

We put that in the budget but then the government is saying, now, that was like a wild political thing for us to do. So I would argue that's not that different than the minister putting Bay du Nord in the fiscal forecast when the project hasn't even been sanctioned yet. I don't see how those are different initiatives.

I do want to also quote the Federation of Labour in saying "this budget falls short in presenting a bold, and forward-thinking plan for the future of our province."

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: I think this might be a good time to talk about helmets. In case the Minister of Energy forgot, he's in charge now. He's the House Leader. He's the Minister of Energy. I've heard, I think, three times in this House or maybe four or five now – counting today – the Minister of Energy talk about helmets and I assume he is referring to the fact that we made helmets mandatory on Side By Sides, and I stand by that.

L. PARROTT: I was referring to the deal that was made with that. That's what I am referring to.

S. STOODLEY: So, Speaker, I would love the opportunity to talk about helmets.

When you walk into the Janeway, I've walked into the Janeway emergency room with my five-year-old, you walk in the doors and you turn left. There is a whole wall. I only saw this when I went there with my five-year-old. I had no idea this was there. There's a whole wall at the Janeway dedicated to mandatory helmets. The wall says the government changed the law in this state. The wall says that the law changed to make helmets mandatory. They have graphs of the stats of child injuries and how helmets prevent injuries of children. There is a whole wall at the Janeway dedicated to mandatory helmets and the law change that I was very proud to be a part of.

So I will not apologize for making helmets mandatory. This is the fourth or fifth time – and if the Minister of Energy, if the government really does not want to have mandatory helmets, it is in their power to change the law. They could change the *Off-Road Vehicles Act* and the regulations. They could bring it into this House. We

would vote against it. They would invoke closure. Then they could change the law. It is completely within the government's power to change that.

So it's beyond me of how they can chirp –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: – policy decisions that now they have the power to change. If you don't like helmets, I encourage the government – well no, I don't. I really hope you don't, but you have the power to change that. If you want to remove mandatory helmets, do so. You can force that vote. You have a majority government. But, like, chirping, this is the fifth or sixth time –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: – that I've heard helmets, helmets. Yes, we made helmets mandatory. I will not apologize for saving and helping children. I would encourage anyone to go to the Janeway.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I still have two hours left. We could talk about helmets for two hours.

I'd encourage anyone to go to the Janeway.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: Sorry, they probably don't want everyone to go in and look at the wall of the Janeway.

But I was there with my child who was having trouble breathing, and I glanced over and there's a whole wall dedicated. It says on this date the law changed and helmets are now mandatory. There's a graph of child injuries and law changes. It talked about what's allowed in other provinces. I had no idea it was there. It was amazing.

So I am very proud of that change in Newfoundland and Labrador about helmets. If the government wants to change the law and no longer make helmets mandatory, it is in their prerogative to do so. It's their prerogative to change any law, and we will filibuster that and they can –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: – invoke closure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio, please continue.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

So I might come back to helmets because I still have two hours and seven minutes – although it's 4, so I really have an hour and 10 minutes.

Speaker, our party and our former government, speaking of the MOU and the Churchill Falls deal, I'm going to circle back to that for a bit. I know I'm losing my voice but thank you for everyone for sticking with me. We urge the government to move forward with the Churchill Falls deal. I don't know if they've already seen what's in the report that's coming today. I don't know if the report will be made public or not.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: The day, yes, there's not that much longer in the day. We encourage them to make it public; we'll see if that happens or not.

They say they're going to develop Gull Island but we don't know when, with who, or who is going to pay for it. They've included Bay du Nord in the fiscal forecast, as I mentioned, but the project hasn't been sanctioned yet. If the accountants suggested that they do that, then that's fine; I respect that. That would align with the public sector accounting rules, which are the same rules that advised us on what to do with money like the tobacco settlement.

Those types of decisions are not political decisions. There are standards, accounting standards and professional designations and that type of financial advice is not political. That is professional from those types of experts like accountants.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

The Federation of Labour says this budget falls short in presenting a bold and forward-thinking plan for the future of our province. They did put aside \$8 million for a referendum on the Churchill Falls MOU, I understand, in the budget. I also understand that that's the same cost as a full provincial election.

I mean, I personally don't agree with a referendum because we spent four full days. We heard experts. I personally am supportive of the MOU; I'll stand by that any day. I've done my own due diligence. I've used the information and resources available to me to make a decision of whether or not I agree with it, and I would encourage everyone in this House to do that. You can go back and look at the debates, hear the questions, ask questions. I would encourage everyone in this House

to come up with own decision on whether or not they support that deal.

I don't think a referendum is fair or reasonable for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. There are many people in this province who are very highly educated on that, and they're on both sides, for or against; but I would say, confidently, that the majority of the province is not educated on the deal, are not interested in educating themselves on the deal and voted for our elected representatives to make these decisions for them. That is why we are here. We are duly elected to make decisions. My job is to make decisions on behalf of the people of Mount Scio. That is literally my job.

I think a referendum is a – I can't think of the most appropriate word, but you're not doing your duty if you're taking a policy decision that you've had over a year and all of the information available to make a decision on. I think it's irresponsible to put that type of decision on the general public, especially when the government party had extra budget to hire their own experts. I never heard anything about they needed more money or more time or more questions or more days, and that was a year ago. The government could have gotten any other additional advice that they wanted.

So they have an extra committee, and the committee sought feedback from the general public. It's just like we're going in circles all day long. I would personally, fully, not recommend that the government do a referendum. I think that would be an incredible waste of the taxpayers' dollars.

We know the MOU also expires today, which is incredibly sad. Now, the government, of course, they can agree to restart that with Quebec. They can put a new date on it. They can put no date, absolutely, but that agreement, as it stands, the MOU expires today. I can't see any world where, let's say the report comes

back in a few hours and is glowing and says you have to go sign this deal. I understand earlier today a group of academics from Acadia came out in support of the deal.

The \$1.4 billion that we would get backdated, there's no way Quebec is going to give us that back. Even if everyone agrees to move forward with the MOU as it is, I don't know why Quebec would give up that \$1.4 billion, which I'm sure the Minister of Finance would love to have in the budget because the government could actually deliver on the promises that they promised people with an extra \$1.4 billion. They could do safer communities and better health care and lower taxes with an extra \$1.4 billion this year. They could do that, but they couldn't do what they promised people and I would encourage Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to reflect on that.

I really had such confidence in the MOU and the team. It was going to be generational. I really hope that that opportunity is not gone. We had a world leading negotiation team. We had a challenge team challenging the negotiation team. It's just unbelievable.

I'm very proud of what my government achieved while in office. We weren't perfect, but I know that there are thousands of people in Newfoundland and Labrador better off because of the work that we did. We governed and we listened.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: I'm going to go to my other notes. See, I was making some extra notes today.

Oh, yes, I was going to talk about GDP growth; I think that's incredibly important. Oh, and I'm going to talk about artificial intelligence; I think that's very important too.

I'll start with GDP growth. So, yes, we are leading the country in GDP growth, and I think: good job former Liberal government

for leading the country in GDP growth. What a Liberal government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Fair enough, the government gets to claim that now, but from the research that I did, government policy changes and decisions take one to five years to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's starting to get a bit loud here. I'm trying to hear the hon. Member.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Government decisions and policy actions take one to five years before they impact GDP. This GDP can change based on national resource output, investment, consumption and international trade and interprovincial trade. So I'm 100 per cent confident that the GDP growth that the province is experiencing now, which the government gets to benefit from, was directly related to actions of our Liberal government.

I quote the Bank of Canada: Full effects are usually felt after several quarters in terms of a government decision, and when that effect is felt in the general public and manifests itself as GDP change.

The International Monetary Fund says the GDP effects of structural reforms on output tend to materialize gradually over time. It's not like a decision today and then, in two months time, the GDP has changed. It doesn't work like that.

The OECD, which is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – I think that's the acronym for the OECD. We usually hear it referred to as OECD. They said structural reforms typically take time to

have a measurable impact on economic growth.

I am fully confident that the GDP that the government get to benefit from was a direct result of our policies that we made as a Liberal government.

I'd also like to talk about artificial intelligence for a bit because artificial intelligence is changing the world. The federal government has a minister responsible for artificial intelligence.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: I don't know if I'm allowed to say their name.

There are three provinces in Canada, Speaker, that talked about artificial intelligence in their budget speech. Ontario makes numerous mentions about artificial intelligence and how it's going to change their society.

In 2019, I introduced a PMR in this House which had unanimous consent urging the federal government to increase regulations of the use of artificial intelligence. That was 6½ years ago, and 6½ years later, there is still no federal legislation regulating the use of artificial intelligence. It is an extremely significant gap.

We heard from a Member's statement today about a local company CoLab, who have just renamed themselves CoLab AI, and artificial intelligence is transforming how companies run today. It's incredible. I think it is an incredible misstep for the government not to have included any mention – like, they only mentioned the technology sector in terms of under defense. They took technology out of the name of the department. There's no consideration at all for the tech sector in the Budget Speech yesterday and no consideration for how society is dramatically changing as a result of artificial intelligence.

All the big tech companies are getting rid of staff because they don't need them anymore, and I saw a local company did an announcement a few months ago that they're able to save hundreds of thousands of dollars, by – they took software that was up for renewal, they thought it was too expensive, and they used AI to develop a software themselves. They did that and it cost, you know, a very small fraction of what the software service would cost. So, moving forward, the whole technology industry is going to change and it is changing very rapidly as a result of artificial intelligence.

I could get on my laptop now and say: build me a program. I could tell it all that I want and it would just go away and do it in the background, and then an hour later it will come back and give me the program. I'll say, okay, I want a user manual; it will come back and say here's your user manual. I will say I want an architecture diagram; it will give me architecture diagrams. There's very little that you cannot achieve with the out-of-the-box consumer artificial intelligence programs today. Like, it is wild.

I heard from one expert, maybe a month ago, who was saying that software, as a service now, as an industry, they're all completely beside themselves because, as artificial intelligence becomes more prominent and more powerful, even on a daily basis – like everyday there's a new model out. Even last week, the federal government had to ask Anthropic not to release their latest artificial intelligence model because it was too powerful. The Canadian federal government were worried about the cybersecurity implications of Anthropic releasing their artificial intelligence model in the general population, so the government asked them: do not release this.

This is the time we're living in. This is really powerful, scary stuff. It needs to be regulated. The federal government needs to up their game. I understand from the

minister responsible for artificial intelligence that they are working on it.

I want to give a shout-out to the minister – I don't know his full title, but in Alberta, the minister responsible for, I think, technology. They are transforming how they do IT within the Government of Alberta. They are building things using artificial intelligence.

Yesterday, during budget day, I was going to try and go but then, because it was budget day, obviously, this is more important for me and the people of Mount Scio and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Yesterday, the Government of Alberta hosted in Ottawa an AI hackathon. So they brought public servants, elected officials from across the country to Ottawa yesterday, and they spent the day hacking federal government programs.

So asking all kinds of questions, finding all kinds of answers, solving problems, building things. It was the Government of Alberta's, kind of, rebel stance against the federal government – fair. But it was collaborative and it was very insightful, and it's amazing what you can do with the technology. I do give kudos to the Government of Alberta. They are fully embracing it for productivity, for efficiency and they're recognizing how society is changing as a result of artificial intelligence.

I recently completed an artificial intelligence course and even the instructor was telling us that six months ago, the course would've looked completely different. There are two companies, OpenAI and Anthropic, and every day they're releasing new models that completely change the way people work.

I do think that it is amiss for the government not to acknowledge how society is changing and will change dramatically over the next four years, over their mandate, as a result of artificial intelligence. The technology sector will not be the same in four years. Technology companies will not be the same. CorCare might be the same because

that's owned by one company, Epic, and over 70 per cent of health records of people in the United States are held within Epic. So that is a giant, the Cadillac of health care systems, I have to say.

But, other than that, I think government really needs to change the way it's working in terms of use of artificial intelligence. When I was in the department formerly known as Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, I made sure to prioritize funding under the federal government workforce programs for programs to help companies and industries and associations adopt AI and learn more about AI because that is how our society is changing. There's an incredible opportunity. It's incredibly scary.

I know for oil and gas, there's the digital twin and then, for defence, digital twin is also a concept there. Artificial intelligence is just transforming how that sector works and how those opportunities present themselves and how the whole defence sector operates. AI is fundamentally transforming the defence sector and what that means for North America and global politics. I think it's a huge miss for the government to completely miss technology, let alone artificial intelligence, from their departments, from the Budget Speech. It's a significant miss in my opinion.

I wish I had the opportunity to have gone to the AI hacking day the Government of Alberta was hosting yesterday. The next one, I'm going to try to go to. It's very interesting, and I think artificial intelligence can help democracy.

I can hear them sighing, but I have an hour and 15 minutes left to talk about things that are important to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on behalf of the Official Opposition. I listened very intently to the Minister of Finance and his Budget Speech and I didn't sigh out loud.

I do think it's a miss for the government to not include any reference to technology

other than under defence in the Budget Speech. I would encourage the ministers over there to ask questions. There are very smart people in the Office of the Chief Information Officer. They can tell you all about it.

While I'm on that, we are going to get into more of that in Estimates, hopefully, with OCIO. I've since learned that Microsoft Copilot, the government's artificial intelligence provider, is not really very good. I've tried it on numerous occasions to do various things, so I would encourage the OICO team to look at other AI providers for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador because the Microsoft option is not very good at all. We'll get to more of that when we get to Estimates.

If anyone has any suggestions of things that I could talk about, please, I welcome it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: I can go through my speech again.

Speaker, it really feels like the Conservatives are still in Opposition. They're very focused on us; they should be focused on governing. I think the people of the province do want them to get on with it. For me, going around the community, talking to people, it's kind of a weird conversation; we just lost government, fair enough, but people say to me, what are they doing? They're not getting on with it. They're very slow. The general feeling is that things are very slow.

The Conservatives, they have a budget; they have a majority government; I hope they take ownership and accountability for governing. I know that they're one-eighth of the way through their mandate, and in the last one-eighth of your mandate, the public service will not let the government do anything in the last one-eighth of your mandate, I assure you. I was just there.

So you have two-thirds of your mandate left to you, Government, to impact change for Newfoundland and Labradorians. You say, oh, we just got here. You have two-thirds of your mandate left to fundamentally impact Newfoundlanders and Labradorians before you knock on people's doors again and have to talk to the social contract that you have with your voters and answer questions about what you promised them last time and what you delivered. You have two-thirds of your mandate left. That is not very much.

We're going to be ready, Speaker, I promise you. We are ready and we are chomping at the bit.

So if anyone just tuned in, what did you miss? The government, they won – fair enough, but they won with the 1 per cent extra votes.

A few other things, if you're just tuning in, I am the Finance critic – I'm losing voice – for the Official Opposition. Yesterday was budget day and the government put forward their monetary agenda for the province for the next year. The government are still building three ferries. I see people out at the mall and they stop and they say, are they really going to build the ferries? I was, like, I don't know. That's what they had in their Budget Speech that they're going to build three ferries. They're going to lease a fourth ferry.

Is that what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want the government to spend with their hard-earned tax dollars on?

F. HUTTON: In the campaign, they said they would do the fiscal analysis on it later.

S. STOODLEY: Oh, yes, thank you. In the campaign, I understand the government said that they're going to do the fiscal analysis after, so that is very interesting.

People are still shocked that they're redeveloping St. Clare's. People can not understand why the government is

redeveloping St. Clare's. I would encourage the government Members to have a fieldtrip and visit St. Clare's; walk through it.

I would encourage you to talk to your constituents. I assure you they will tell you that they are not in support of redeveloping St. Clare's hospital. I encourage you to do as you said, because you said you were going to consult with the unions on the redevelopment of St. Clare's, but it's in the budget now that you're still going to do St. Clare's. Have you consulted with the unions? I wonder what the unions think about the decision to redevelop St. Clare's. I wonder what the union members think of the decision to redevelop St. Clare's.

The government – you're going to be the tourism capital of Canada, and that's great and I hope you are. But I ask anyone in the tourism industry, are you confident that this government is going to get you to be the tourism capital of Canada? If so, fair. Good enough. Fair enough. But I'm not sure that that's going to be the answer.

Then we had a heated exchange today with the Minister of Health. I can't imagine how challenging it is to be Minister of Health. We know the Minister of Health is very passionate about representing people, her constituents. But the government says that you should sue them to get the health care from your government. You know, it's wild.

Then I noticed that in the Budget Speech, it says every dollar that we save Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will help. But we were here doing the gas tax amendment and our amendment was mocked by the government. That would've reduced a small amount of tax from a litre of gasoline and it was mocked. That would have saved Newfoundlanders and Labradorians many dollars.

I ask you, is your government meeting the expectation of what you voted them to do? I'll tell you for the record that the

government Members over there are saying yes, and I don't think that's the case.

One of the items that I love talking about is the Public Utilities Board, which I think is very interesting. So when I was minister of Service NL –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I only want to hear the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

As minister of Service NL, I was privileged to learn a lot about the Public Utilities Board when I was there.

L. DEMPSTER: Tell them about information management sharing. That's really important.

S. STOODLEY: My colleague wants me to talk about the *Management of Information Act*. I don't know if I can go there. I might go to the *Management of Information Act*, which I would encourage the government to – actually, I'll just go there now.

I'm sure many of the Members in the House remember the *Management of Information Act* where we talked about the duty to document. There was public outcry to have duty to document and I brought forward amendments to the *Management of Information Act* that would have made it mandatory for public servants to document decisions.

The government – the Opposition at the time – filibustered us, which is their prerogative, filibustered in Committee. After bringing it back numerous times, we did not get the *Management of Information Act* changes through as a government. Something that I regret, but you can't have it all and it was their prerogative to filibuster

the *Management of Information Act* changes.

If they hadn't, if we had passed that law, they would be able to see a full recount of all the decisions we had made and all the inputs to those decisions and all the elements that made up those decisions. The public could ATIPP those decision records. There were requirements for what public servants had to keep and what they didn't have to keep in terms of a new requirement to document important decisions. There was clear guidance about what made and made up an important decision, but the government decided to filibuster that and so we did not get that legislation. Now, I guess, they probably wish that they hadn't filibustered it because they would have had much more ammunition to give us a hard time, which they love doing.

But I would encourage the government to continue and to bring forward changes to the *Management of Information Act*. It's kind of silly, in my opinion, why they would choose to filibuster that bill in particular. I think the gas tax was one that was important to us recently, but I have to say we never invoked closure. I didn't know that that was an option. Not one time did our Liberal government invoke closure in 10 years.

We are passionate about the Future Fund. We're asking the government questions about that. We introduced the Future Fund. I still don't understand why the government was so against the *Management of Information Act* and they continued to filibuster it. We did not invoke closure on the *Management of Information Act*. We did not get it and it did not pass and it is the Opposition's prerogative to filibuster in Committee and we didn't get that. I bet the government wishes now that they hadn't filibustered that, so that they could have a lot more decisions to look back on and more criteria for those decisions.

I will go to the Public Utilities Board, which is an incredibly interesting, important cog in the regulation of utilities in Newfoundland and Labrador and other things. So the Public Utilities Board regulates gas prices. They regulate car insurance. They regulate taxi insurance and bus insurance. They regulate electricity rates. They regulate a few other things like propane rates, diesel rates and a few other things, but there's a board, the Public Utilities Board – and I remember, when I was minister, I wasn't very happy with a few things they were doing. I went to see them and they joked that they don't tell people who they work for when they go to parties. You don't go to meet someone and they say – they don't say, oh, I work for the Public Utilities Board; I'm a commissioner of the Public Utilities Board.

That was a comment that stuck with me. In public, they don't announce themselves as a member of the Public Utilities Board, and I can hear the sighs from the Members opposite, but it just makes me more resolved in my desire to speak at my length.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

My length of time speaking will have a direct correlation to the amount of sighs I hear from the government Members. Thank you very much for the motivation to keep talking.

So the Public Utilities Board – let's talk about the five cents for Come By Chance.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Future Fund.

S. STOODLEY: What? The Future Fund.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

S. STOODLEY: Okay, I'll talk about the Future Fund some more.

The Public Utilities Board, very interesting – when I was minister of Service NL, I

interacted with the Public Utilities Board in terms of gas prices and car insurance. The Public Utilities makes a lot of decisions and, under regulations, they have power to make certain decisions and they don't have the power to make other decisions.

One of the decisions I significantly disagreed with, which we, I think, had a unanimous vote in this House previously, was around profit on Facility on auto insurance. Facility – I used to work in insurance so, apologies, I know insurance is very complicated.

In car insurance, some drivers have a lot of accidents. Because driving is an important part of our culture and our economy, there is an association called Facility Association that insures, essentially, all the worst drivers in Canada. It might be 10 or 20 per cent, but the 10 or 20 per cent worst drivers in Canada and the drivers who have the most accidents are insured through Facility so that all the insurers all lose equally because people need to drive and people need car insurance. They do need home insurance as well, and there is some argument of whether or not home insurance should be regulated, but it's not and that's a fair discussion.

In terms of auto insurance, the Public Utilities Board regulates auto insurance rates and Facility rates. So every two or three years, the auto insurance companies have to tell the Public Utilities Board – hey, Public Utilities Board – they have to give them a big table of all the rates and all the conditions. So a driver with 20 years' experience who's female, who owns this type of car, this is the type of rate that they will get. Actually, they have to say this is the exact rate. The insurance companies have to produce, for the Public Utilities Board, a very defined, strict schedule of all the pricing inputs and what the resulting prices would be.

When I used to work for an insurance company, I was doing all the online stuff. As

a part of our job, we had to make sure all the rates matched, what had been filed with the Public Utilities Board in Newfoundland and Labrador. You have to do that for every province because all the rates have to align with what the provincial governments expect and the regulators. It's incredibly important.

Facility is the insurer who insures, essentially, the 10 to 20 per cent – I'm not sure exactly what it is – of the most costly drivers in Canada. So all the insurance companies share in the losses from those drivers.

Facility has always been not-for-profit, and then the insurance companies all put in a proportionate amount of money to lose the same amount of money. That's how Facility and the auto insurance works in Canada, except for the provinces where the provincial government offers auto insurance. Because BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the government does auto insurance in those provinces. You buy auto insurance from a Crown corporation of the government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I do get distracted, and I know the Members opposite know that I get distracted. I have earplugs here that I can put in if I need to.

But back to auto insurance and the Public Utilities Board and Facility. The Public Utilities Board granted Facility – and I spoke about this when we made changes a few years ago to the *Insurance Companies Act* I believe it was. The Public Utilities Board made a decision that allows Facility to recoup profit in the business that they were doing, writing in Newfoundland and Labrador for car insurance for the costliest drivers.

Now the Public Utilities Board, in reviewing auto insurance, they also dictate auto insurance rates. So the Public Utilities Board has a percentage that they allow auto insurers to make. I think it's a certain percentage over a 10-year period or a six-year period. They're allowed to make a certain percentage of profit over, I think, a rolling six-year period.

The money that the insurance companies lose through the Facility business is part of the profit – the financial savings are part of the profit that the insurance companies are allowed to make. So they're already making a profit on Facility; it's just built into their overall corporate profile for, let's say, Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Public Utilities Board had made a decision that they were going to allow Facility to charge an extra percentage, and every other province in Canada was going to allow that. I would say it took me a long time to convince the public servants that this was not okay. But finally, I got them on my side and I was very proud that we brought a piece of legislation into this House and we changed the act, because the act was silent on profit for Facility. So Facility had always been not-for-profit.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Oh, I didn't see that.

I was very proud to bring that legislation into the House stopping Facility from charging profit, because the insurance companies were already getting their allowed percentage of profit on their overall book of business in Newfoundland and Labrador. They didn't need an extra 8 per cent or 10 per cent from the Facility business.

We talked about that in this House and I was very pleased of the piece of legislation that we brought forward to save Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on their car insurance. In Newfoundland and Labrador, many taxi drivers are under

Facility. Although they don't need to be, many times they are under Facility. So that directly impacted the insurance rates paid by taxi drivers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'll also talk about the Public Utilities Board, because there's no mention of the Public Utilities Board in the budget. I'll be honest, during the election – and we had been in government for a while, and the PC Party won government, fair enough, but I had a plan of all the things that I've would have done, have achieved if I was in Cabinet again and we were in government. One of the things that was on my target, my radar, was the Public Utilities Board.

I think there is significant room to revamp, refresh, redo, relook at the Public Utilities Board, how they operate, the legislation that falls under them, the powers that they have. I do think that that should be investigated and analyzed. I'm fortunate enough to be on the Public Accounts Committee and maybe as a Public Accounts Committee, we can talk to the Auditor General about how we look at the Public Utilities Board and the work that they do to strengthen them and the regulation of our utilities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

But I also worked with them a lot on gas prices. Many times in this House, we talked about gas prices. Come By Chance, we know that this was maybe 2020-2021, they stopped producing their own gas, petroleum products in Newfoundland and Labrador and they started importing from other markets. That meant their costs were going up.

So they wrote the Public Utilities Board and I believe they asked for eight or 10 cents extra a litre to cover the cost of importing the fuel. Because in Newfoundland and Labrador and all the Atlantic provinces, the fuel petroleum product industry, like automobile fuel for your car, regular petroleum products and diesel, it's like a cost-recovery model. The companies get

the money back that they spend. It is a regulated model and I have thought a lot about deregulating that, which is something else I can talk about, deregulating gas prices, which, I think, is a very interesting argument I would be happy to have with anyone, any time. I'm not convinced either way. I think there is room for potential deregulation of gas prices.

Back to Come By Chance, they wrote the Public Utilities Board asking for eight to 10 cents increase in the price of gas at the pumps, but the Public Utilities Board decided that it should be five cents. Five cents was added to every litre of gasoline from that point forward, for all companies. Even companies who did not need the money got an extra five cents. It was an overnight windfall for all the companies – incredible, and rightfully so, the Public Utilities Board is the regulator. The government changes the law; the regulator administers the law.

How many times did we talk about the five cents for Come By Chance and why that was on and when that was coming off? I went to see the Public Utilities Board about that. I was very unhappy with the response that they got. I need to ATIPP my own letters to the Public Utilities Board. I'd love to have those because I had five very strong concerns with what they were doing. I went to see them, and I came out with very unsatisfactory answers. As minister responsible for a significant portion of the legislation that they regulate, I was very unhappy coming out of those meetings.

Then we had to change the *Petroleum Products Act* so that government could direct the Public Utilities Board to do a review of gas prices, which was long overview. So the Public Utilities Board did undertake, then, a multi-year review of gas prices.

First, they consulted with the company to say, what should we do with gas prices? That was, I think, eight months to a year for

the company to come back and dictate what the review was going to look like. Then, they did the Newfoundland review and the Labrador review separately, and they came back with recommendations which, last year, I think, were put into effect.

Then there were additional changes that gave the Public Utilities Board more powers. As a result of that, we saw the Public Utilities Board change the day of the week in which they change the gas prices, I believe from a Thursday to a Friday, to align with other Atlantic Canadian provinces. The Public Utilities Board can choose that, and that's fine. I don't think it's a big public consequence what day of the week the gas prices change.

I'd encourage anyone – and we talked about this earlier this session when we talked about gas prices, and I think this is incredibly relevant. There's not that many people in Newfoundland and Labrador that understand how gas prices work, but there's the wholesaler. On the Public Utilities Board website, there's a really interesting, simple breakdown of the gas prices and what goes into gas prices.

There's the Brent crude price, the wholesaler gets it from the New York harbour or wherever they get the barrel of oil, they transport it to the retailers and that's the wholesale price. The wholesaler is allowed to recoup the actual cost plus a markup. They're allowed a markup. The Public Utilities Board regulates that. They have to show receipts to the Public Utilities Board to justify what their costs are, which goes to the deregulation argument, and I can get to that. I still have some time.

Then the retailers, obviously, you go and you put your card in, or you go to the cashier, and you pay for your gas, you might buy a few other things. That carries a cost. For the gas station to be there, there's the cost of the fuel, but also additional costs for them to have staff and have lights, electricity and property tax and the gas tank

inspections and all of that. So that all gets added on top. Then there's the price the consumer pays. The retailer is also allowed a markup.

In the most recent gas price review that the Public Utilities Board did, based on the prices inputted by the wholesaler and the retailer, the wholesale markup remains the same but the retail markup increased, reasonably.

I can't remember the exact percentage off the top of my head. So the five cents was gone – they took away the five cents. There were no more five cents for Come By Chance. The wholesalers got the same amount of money. They didn't get any more money. Essentially, the wholesalers lost 5 per cent, which the Public Utilities Board determined they did not need in the first place. The wholesalers lost the five cents – apologies, I think I said 5 per cent – five cents – the wholesalers lost that.

The retailer, I'm pretty sure, made more than that. I think when the retailers submitted their cost to the Public Utilities Board, it was seven or eight cents a litre that they were spending. So for the consumer that wasn't that big of a change but there was a big change in behind the scenes – the five cents that the consumer was paying for the wholesaler, essentially, was changed to go to the retailer. Then the Public Utilities Board added a few more cents on top of that.

It's good for the retailers and the small business owners in Newfoundland and Labrador who own gas stations. It was an incredible economic driver for small business owners that own gas stations in Newfoundland and Labrador. They did incredibly well when the Public Utilities made that change. So I'm glad that small business owners got to do that.

Anyone interested in gas prices, I'd encourage you to read the Public Utilities Board gas price review.

I just want to pivot to deregulation of gas prices for a bit because that is also something a government could announce. I really, seriously, considered that. It comes with significant risk – deregulating gas prices.

In Ontario and most of Canada, gas prices are not regulated. They change by the second. They change by the hour. They change by the minute. They're always going up and down based on global factors but in Atlantic Canada, gas prices are regulated based on those inputs.

So the key element for me was when my opinion changed from, we should regulate gas prices to, maybe, we shouldn't regulate them anymore, but I didn't get to a point where I was convinced enough to bring anything forward – was the Clean Fuel Regulations.

The previous Liberal federal government introduced the Clean Fuel Regulations which added a significant cost to the wholesalers. So wholesaler A, they now have carbon requirements that they have to meet at a national level. They don't have to break it down on a province-by-province basis. They have to meet it at a national level.

When this came into force last spring, I believe, after a year, they have to prove to the federal government: This is how I met your carbon regulations. Our business is cleaner. There are many, many ways they could meet the regulations, anything from the production itself or how they transport or electric vehicles. It's up to them how they decide to decarbonize or reduce the carbon that goes into their operations.

But with the Atlantic Canadian model of regulated gas prices, that just doesn't work because Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and residents in PEI and residents in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are paying for 100 per cent of the cost for the wholesalers to meet the federal

government's Clean Fuel Regulations. We know that the federal government removed the Clean Electricity Regulations, they were called. I also think the federal government should remove the Clean Fuel Regulations because that is similar, but different, and impacts Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I know that our government had written the federal government on numerous occasions about the Clean Fuel Regulations and I would encourage the government to take up that charge again. It would save Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at the pump. I believe the Clean Fuel Regulations markup right now is, I think, 3.5 cents. No, it might be up to four or five cents.

I remember telling my team at the time, because we didn't know how much money the Public Utilities Board were going to add for this carbon adjuster, the carbon market adjuster, I believe it's called. So I think I told them, if it's any more than three cents, I'm ripping the band-aid off deregulation of gas prices. When it came back from the Public Utilities Board, it was just under my threshold of what I gave them. So I don't know if that's coincidence or not.

But I did significantly look at deregulation. I asked: How can we find more information about deregulation? That was a serious consideration that the team and I went through. I looked at all the academic experts in the world about gas prices. Could we pay them to do a study for gas deregulation? Could I pay for their opinion? So most of the oil and gas researchers or academics –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I realize this is a money bill and I'm allowing a lot of latitude. But I would ask the Member to try to somehow make that connection now to the actual budget.

S. STOODLEY: Perfect, thank you very much. I appreciate that.

So I think gas revenues are an incredibly important part to the government Treasury. So when we look at government revenues and the amount of money Newfoundland and Labrador gets from the Treasury, now if they got rid of the Clean Fuel Regulations and the carbon price comes off the price of gas, that would impact the Treasury. They would be getting less money from the HST and so the government would be getting less revenue in the budget if the Clean Fuel Regulations came off.

Then if gas prices were deregulated, I think part of the challenge is that a market like St. John's, prices would probably go down, but a more rural market, prices would probably go up. Considering an equivalence market in Newfoundland and Labrador, one with a consistent tax base for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the budget, I did not proceed with deregulating gas prices and we could not find levers that I could pull to further investigate that seriously.

I welcome the government to take up that banner and progress that. I think that's a very interesting question that could be part of a government mandate. I will give that to you. You can take that deregulation gas process. You can blame it on me. You can use it or not and that's your prerogative.

What a privilege it is to stand here and do the Official Opposition's critique of the government's budget from yesterday.

I will go back to a few things just in case someone is tuning in now and they missed the earlier part of what I was talking about.

Medical transportation: the government and the blue book, which is now their mandate, their government mandate, they promised to fund 100 per cent of medical transportation. In the budget, this year, the budget from yesterday, they only added \$3.7 million in new money.

We're going to get into this in Estimates and I look forward to hearing from all the Members opposite about how, in their departments, what are all the nuances? What are all the criteria for all the elements within their departments?

I look forward to hearing from the Minister of Health during Estimates and in the House about the medical transportation program. It seems to us that the eligibility is staying exactly the same. They're adding more money. Great. Fair. Good for you. But the eligibility is staying exactly the same is our understanding and I welcome a correction on that.

I ask Newfoundlanders and Labradorians impacted by medical transportation: Is that what you voted for in the election? Is that what you expected when you voted for the government Member when they knocked on your door and you talked about medical transportation? Because I'm sure many people in this room had those conversations with the residents at their doors not that long ago.

As eligibility was not expanded – my parents live in Grand Falls-Windsor and they travel to Gander for medical appointments all the time. I assume now they won't be eligible, but based on the government's original promise, I said, well, you're going to be able to, I don't know, maybe expense your gas from Grand Falls-Windsor to Gander because you have to go to Gander for these medically necessary appointments. The government did not change eligibility at all for the Medical Transportation Assistance Program in this budget.

I will go back to some of my other notes. I do have to say I'm very proud of what my government achieved while we were in office. It wasn't perfect –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: – but I know that there are hundreds and thousands of people better off because of the work that we did as a government.

Let's see, which elements do I want to focus on further? Child care –

AN HON. MEMBER: ECEs?

S. STOODLEY: That's an excellent question. I will go back to early childhood educators. There was a protest a few weeks ago outside – I think it was the first protest I attended as a Member of the Opposition and it's very different being a government Member or a Cabinet minister at a protest versus being a Member in Opposition.

It's a privilege that the ministers get to be in those decision-making roles. With that responsibility, comes those tricky conversations you have to have when you don't give people what you promised them. So we see early childhood educators, the government's mandate promised pensions and sick leave for early childhood educators and those were costed.

AN HON. MEMBER: Wage grid.

S. STOODLEY: Pardon?

AN HON. MEMBER: Wage grid.

S. STOODLEY: And wage grid, which we did not see in this budget either. When you go to the Department of Education's website and look at the Early Childhood Educator Wage Grid, it says 2003 to 2006. That was the finite wage grid for those three years. It wasn't an infinite time wage grid. It was a wage grid that ended in 2026.

Given that the Department of Education knows this, I assume that would have been one of the considerations this government looked at when they were coming up with their budget. I did not hear that, and I welcome the correction that they are, in fact, improving or increasing the wage grid for

early childhood educators. It only goes up 2026, so I'm not sure what anyone thought would happen in 2027 in terms of Early Childhood Educator Wage Grid.

We've met with many early childhood educator groups and they would like more. We didn't do everything, but I'm very proud of what we did do: 11,000 spaces. We completely transformed early childhood educator pay. They were all getting a piecemeal funding of different pieces. We brought all that together. We brought in the wage grid, so now there's a transparent, clear grid so that they can see if I have this education and I've been working for this year and I'm working in a rural place, or I work in Labrador, or I speak French, this is how much I'm going to get as an early childhood educator, which I think is incredibly important and incredibly valuable.

In the budget, the budget talked about early childhood – sorry, not the budget, the government's mandate has a cost for early childhood educator pensions, which when I worked it out, for the number of early childhood educators in Newfoundland and Labrador, it was between \$2,000 or \$3,000 an early childhood educator. So I don't understand how the government could think that they could progress a reasonable pension for early childhood educators with that amount that they had estimated in the book, which is now the government's mandate.

That's certainly something that needs to be looked at. But they promised it. Like, I'm not suggesting things that don't exist. People voted at the election; they voted for promises. So I would encourage anyone in Newfoundland and Labrador to reflect on what you voted for, to reflect on is this government meeting the promises that they made to you when they knocked on your door and asked you to vote for you.

So thank you very much, Speaker. I just did want to talk about some more early childhood educator information. There's an

article on CBC: "Advocate, parent decry lack of wage increase for child-care workers in updated plan." There's a quote I just want to read: "I have no words, really, because that's the first thing I looked for when I saw the document," said Gordon, a steering committee member of the advocacy group Child Care Now N.L. and an early childhood educator herself.

"So, it feels like an insult and it feels like we don't matter."

"We have inflation going up, the cost of living is going up," said Gordon.

"So, ECEs are restless, and rightly so, because we can't afford to do anything."

They are compensated based both on their education and experience, and according to the wage grid, with a Level 1 certification and 11 years or more in the sector, they earn \$22.50 an hour. That is really tricky. The wage grid was from 2023 to 2026. There is no wage grid for 2027. So that is something this government is going to have to address. They're going to have to figure out what is the wage grid for 2027.

I believe there are some union negotiations coming up as well soon, so the government is going to have to decide how much extra they're going to pay nurses, how much extra they're going to pay teachers, how much extra, if any, hopefully a decent amount, they're going to increase the wage grid for early childhood educators. Those are challenging decisions that are not reflected in the budget. Wage increases for health care professionals, I didn't read that in the budget. I didn't read wage increases for anyone in the budget, for all of us. No wage increases, for all of us. It's wild.

I do want to thank early childhood educators for the important work that they do. When we put together the wage grid, I was a Member of Cabinet at the time and early childhood educators were getting piecemeal funding. They were getting different pieces

and they were getting grants and bursaries to make up a salary and based on that salary, they couldn't use that to, say, get a car loan or go towards a mortgage –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's starting to get a little bit loud again. I want to hear the hon. Member.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I was very proud that we brought all that together under one simplified wage grid for early childhood educators. I do also want to talk about the value that early childhood educators provide because part of the rationale and the policy objective with the whole \$10-a-day child care program is so that the children in Newfoundland and Labrador receive an excellent early childhood education with professional staff. The outcomes are incredibly good.

So that's why there's a wage grid. Just like teachers, the more education you have, the higher your rate of pay and that is directly related to the experience and education that you have and you can impart on our children in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We know that for children of vulnerable families, let's say there's not a rich, stimulating environment at home, that those children have significantly better outcomes when they go into an early childhood educator environment. They're playing with other children. They're learning things like anger management and breathing techniques. They get two snacks and a lunch. They get fed really well, and I'm so proud to be part of a government that introduced that and that recognized that.

I'm really interested by that example where my son was blowing at the candles on his birthday cake as a breathing exercise. I mentioned that to someone in the Department of Health; I was there for a

meeting one day. They said that was *The Way Forward* – five years ago, before I was in government, they could tell me exactly the policy initiative of the Liberal government before me – of which some Members here were a part of – that made the change that introduced the social-emotional learning into early childhood education and into that field so that children could benefit from that.

As a government, our investment, first, was \$25 a day, and then \$10 a day was directly so that our littlest people in the province could start off with a fair headstart, no matter what their home life was like, no matter how stimulating. I know not everyone has the same opportunities at home. This was trying to level the playing field so that, in the spirit of the Health Accord, over 20, 30, 40, 50 years, we would all kind of bring up society a little bit. I was very proud of that \$10-a-day child care program.

I also noticed that, in the budget, the government had committed to expanding school meals in schools. I didn't see that in the speech yesterday, so I think that's an important question that we're going to talk about in Estimates. Hopefully we can hear from all the ministers in terms of all the budget items in their department.

L. DEMPSTER: Food security.

S. STOODLEY: Food security – extremely important.

I have about, maybe, six or seven – a little bit before, I'm going to adjourn and then take up my time next time. I'm going to carefully plan all the additional things that I will talk about next time, because I do think it's incredibly important on behalf of the people of the province and the people of Mount Scio that I do take this important opportunity, especially when I'm being heckled and sighed at and all these things. It is my parliamentary responsibility to properly represent people of Newfoundland

and Labrador and Mount Scio, and I do plan on taking full advantage of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I do look forward to hearing from all the ministers and the government Members, the backbench Members as well, to hear about, in the budget, what they think is delivering for their constituents, and then also for their departments. Give us all the full meal deal of what it is, what it's not, answer all the questions that we have in Committee. You can also do it during your speaking time. Everyone is going to have 20 minutes and then another 20 minutes and then another 20 minutes. So after my budget response, I'm going to have an additional 40 minutes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Which is an amazing privilege – an amazing privilege, Speaker. It's such a privilege to stand here and spend this time reflecting on the government's budget from yesterday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. STOODLEY: Speaking of now, it's almost the end of the day, and I look forward to hearing about the Churchill Falls review committee. I understand that they're deliberating, and they're giving their results to government today. So I imagine, hopefully, Cabinet will get that report in the next day or two or whenever Cabinet meets. Maybe they've already done that; maybe they did that this morning.

Hopefully that document will be made public. I think the public expectation certainly would be that that document would be made public so that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can hear, good or bad, what this committee thinks.

Earlier today, we did hear a group of academics from Acadia University who were

in support of the MOU, and I do think it's important to think about the J.P. Morgan, the Power Advisory and those global experts who were here for four days, all day. I think it was like 47 question periods that we all had a chance to ask those experts questions about the MOU.

AN HON. MEMBER: It was one day.

S. STOODLEY: Well, we had experts here for four days. I welcome heckling now because I'm very happy to talk to anything that Members opposite want me to talk about for another nine minutes.

We had people here for different days; we had an advance notice. I didn't hear anyone asking for more time because I think we would have made accommodations to have them stay longer if needed.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Oh, I'm being heckled by the Premier. Speaker, what a privilege it is to be heckled by the Premier –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. STOODLEY: – what a privilege to be heckled by the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Come on.

Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm going to conclude, I guess, and I'm going to reiterate, for anyone who's just

tuning in, that the government reduced the sugar tax from zero to zero. They reduced the gas tax from 7.5 cents to 7.5 cents. They maintained status quo for motor registration, \$80 to \$80.

I know the government Members say, oh, well it wasn't in the fiscal framework. Well, I'll be honest, that's because every year that was a new decision that we made. We didn't decide to permanently remove the motor registration fees. That was a year-by-year decision based on the financial position of the province. So that was like a budget announcement. We did make that decision multiple years, but that was a year-by-year budget decision. So the government now –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's starting to get a little loud again. We're almost there, guys. It's seven minutes to go.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I don't mean that in a disrespectful way to the Member. I'm actually enjoying your speech.

S. STOODLEY: I appreciate the enthusiasm, and I appreciate the enthusiasm of this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: I do want to give the government – they did increase the personal exemption, as they said they would, which will save the average person in Newfoundland and Labrador up to \$28 a month. They did do that, yes, and they did reduce the small business tax by 0.5 per cent. If a company, a small business, is making \$100,000 in profit, they will save \$500 in tax from that change.

I will say that our Liberal government, we reduced the small business tax by the same percentage in 2024. I'm very proud of that

as well. A tax cut on power bills, if the government had also adopted that, would have further saved Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but we didn't see anything like that in the budget.

Instead, we saw the government take the coffee money that people had already paid, that was sitting in account. Yes, it absolutely should have been given back and directed back to ratepayers, 100 per cent without a doubt. That was already money that ratepayers had paid. I think it's completely inappropriate for government to say that this is a budget announcement. That is money that absolutely should have gone back to ratepayers.

Just like if I had a coffee pool at work and we're all paying in \$20 every few months for coffee or \$20 a month or whatever for coffee, there's money left over at the end and I don't have to pay it. We get a free month of coffee because we've already paid in. That's not my employer coming in and saying, oh, here's a free month of coffee, everyone. I'm buying you a free month of coffee. That's money that I've already paid.

Ratepayers have already paid for their electricity rates. The government is not giving that to ratepayers; ratepayers have already paid that. It was sitting in account, and they're redirecting it back to ratepayers. I completely disagree with the categorization that has anything to do with the provincial government other than what signature would have been required to redirect it back to ratepayers.

I'd also like to remember, anyone just tuning in now, are you a rotational worker? Did you get your tax credit?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. STOODLEY: Did you get your tax credit? Fair enough. Yes, a lot of rotational workers are on rotation.

Did the rotational workers get their tax credit? How many doors did Members knock on and talk to rotational workers and the families of rotational workers and said, we're going to get you a rotational worker tax credit? Fair enough. They promised that; they got elected. Is that in this budget? No, there's no rotational worker tax credit in this budget, absolutely not.

They want a lot of thank you for keeping taxes the same. They kept the sugar tax from zero to zero. The gas tax is the same. We introduced an amendment to lower gas tax and that was ridiculed, even though the government, as part of their platform, said part of their pillars was to lower taxes.

AN HON. MEMBER: What are their three pillars?

S. STOODLEY: You know. Better health care – well, okay let's sue the government for health care. Lower taxes – okay, yes. They get \$28 a month worth of lower taxes for people and \$500 in savings if you make \$100,000 profit a year as a small business. Sure. Yes, those are tax savings. No rotational worker tax credit, and safer communities.

I challenge anyone in Newfoundland and Labrador to reflect on your vote, reflect on this government and reflect on the budget. Are they meeting what you voted for when you went to the election booth, when they stood at your door?

I talked about, I have a social contract with voters. That's how I view it. I owe things to them. I have to stand there and knock on their door, again, and ask for their vote, again. That responsibility is so incredibly important to me. I am to abide, and I stand by all the decisions that we have made. I would encourage you to reflect, anyone watching, when the next time a government Member comes and knocks on your door, what is the conversation you're going to have with them? Are they meeting the

expectation that they set with you when they knocked on your door?

Speaker, it really feels like the Conservatives are in Opposition. They are more focused on us as Liberals than they are governing. They're very slow to get going, absolutely. They have a majority government now. They can take ownership and accountability and if they want to make helmets not mandatory again, they have the power to do that, Speaker.

I just want also to say –

AN HON. MEMBER: They shouldn't, though.

S. STOODLEY: I fully recommend against that, and we will filibuster that all day. We will filibuster that all day if they do that, Speaker. They can invoke closure again, because helmets are incredibly important. I hope we don't hear that heckling in this House anymore, Speaker.

I'm happy to speak to helmets any time, any day. I encourage anyone who is confused or wondering, they should go to the Janeway and look at the full wall at the Janeway that I recently discovered is dedicated to mandatory helmets and the legislative change that we brought in, which I'm very proud of.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, I will say, a few weeks ago, I was sitting in my kitchen and my five-year-old came up to me – he says interesting things. He said: Mommy, I need you to get a piece of paper and a pencil. I said: Why? He said: I want you to write down something for me. I said: What do you want me to write? This is, like, 100 per cent true. He said: Write down blue team, be better. He said: I want you to go to work and give them that note when you go back to work.

He was here for a PMR –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: They had a snow day and he spent the day here with me. We were up in my office and I was mailed a copy, I think, of a former Ontario premier's book. I believe every Member received a copy of the book, and the book said something like: Do better, be better.

Alexander – because we were frustrated. We're in the caucus room and he knows there's a red team and a blue team. He came over and he got the book from my bookshelf, and he can read, and he recognized it and he gave it to me. He said: Mommy, please go give this book to the blue team. They need this book.

And I said I can't, and then I had to argue with him and a little bit of a fuss because he would not leave until I – he wanted me to go over and find the blue team so I could give them that book.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would just draw the Member's attention to the clock.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, thank you, Speaker.

As it's 5:30, I move to adjourn debate so that I can pick up again, seconded by the Government House Leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the debate should now be adjourned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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 is carried.

Before we adjourn, I just want to remind Members that the Resource Committee will meet in the Chamber on Monday, May 4, to consider Estimates of the Department of Energy and Mines and also to Members of the Management Commission, we have a meeting now following this, once we adjourn.

This House do now stand adjourned until Monday, May 4, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

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