



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume LI

FIRST SESSION

Number 23

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

Monday

May 4, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today, Mr. Melvin Harnum of Heart's Delight-Islington, who is the subject of a Member's statement, is in attendance in the public gallery; along with his daughter Angie Harnum, his son Trevor Harnum, his grandson Austin Harnum; and Doug Piercey, the Deputy Mayor of Heart's Content.

Welcome to our House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I would also like to welcome to the public gallery today, Lisa Wishart, who is also the subject of a Member's statement today. She's accompanied by her mother Makenzie Wishart.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Okay. Apparently, I have a typo here, so I will correct that. The subject of the Member's statement is Makenzie Wishart and her mother is Lisa Wishart.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we'll hear Members' statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Burgeo - La Poile, Burin - Grand Bank, Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, Conception Bay East - Bell Island and we also have two ministers with leave.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Barrens to Beaches Southwest Coast Trail Association, a volunteer-driven organization whose vision is helping shape the future of outdoor adventure and coastal tourism in Burgeo - La Poile.

Through the development of the Rugged Reach Route, the association is showing the landscapes, viewpoints and geological features that make our region unlike anywhere else in the province.

Their efforts are creating a trail experience that appeals not only to local residents, but to hikers, photographers and visitors seeking authentic, nature-based tourism. By improving access, enhancing safety and developing interpretive features that highlight our natural and cultural heritage, the association is building an attraction that supports healthy living while also strengthening the local tourism economy.

I want to acknowledge the dedicated individuals who guide this work: Julie Baggs, Claudette Benoit, Tyler Benoit, Marc Durnford, Glenda Dollimount, Dana Green, Freeman Hann, Justin Coley, Tom Cutler, Kathy Cutler, Jill Calder, Derrick Mercer, Skylar Skinner, Jennifer Vatcher and Brock Vatcher.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking the Barrens to Beaches Southwest Coast Trail Association for their vision, their leadership and their unwavering commitment to our region.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Speaker, today I am honored to recognize Mayor Kevin Lundrigan of Burin for his remarkable dedication and service to the Town of Burin.

Kevin has served his community for 52 years with unwavering dedication, including 27 years as mayor and two years as deputy mayor.

His leadership has played a major role in shaping the growth, stability and spirit of Burin, and his efforts will have a long-lasting impact on generations of residents. In addition to his municipal service, Mayor Lundrigan devoted 29 years to the Burin Volunteer Fire Department with 20 years as officer, demonstrating courage, leadership and a sense of duty protecting the safety and well-being of the residents of Burin.

Kevin was also recognized with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, the 75th Anniversary Medal and the Governor General Exemplary Service Medal. He was also responsible for the Mina Swim Memorial site, as well as the Tidal Wave site in Burin.

Kevin's volunteering goes beyond his community; he also served for the past 20 years on the Burin Peninsula Regional Service Board and 10 years with the Community Business Development Corporation.

Mayor Lundrigan's lifelong connections to public service stands as an example of leadership and community pride.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

R. BALSOM: Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding milestone of service and dedication in my district.

On March 16, 2026, Melvin Harnum tallied his 50th year of service on the Heart's Delight-Islington Volunteer Fire Department.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

R. BALSOM: In those 50 years, Melvin has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to public safety, serving in every role throughout the department, including 10 years as fire chief.

Beyond his local service, Melvin has been a pillar of regional collaboration. For over 30 years, he served as chair of the Trinity - Bay de Verde Joint Fire Departments Association, supporting coordination amongst the 12 fire departments along the Trinity and Conception Bay shores. He contributed 16 years as Region 1 director with the Newfoundland and Labrador Fire Services Association, representing 41 departments across the Avalon Peninsula.

In addition, Melvin worked as a driver and attendant with the Heart's Delight-Islington ambulance service for 27 years, further exemplifying his unwavering commitment to serving and helping others.

Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me to congratulate Melvin Harnum on 50 years of exceptional volunteer service to our communities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Welcome to our Chamber, Mr. Harnum.

Thank you for your service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize an exceptional young leader from Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, Makenzie Wishart, the 2026 PCSP Youth of the Year.

Makenzie is a level II student at Gonzaga, has distinguished herself through outstanding achievements in academics, athletics and community service, and we thank her for that. She's earned national and international recognition in STEM as a two-time Canada-Wide Science Fair delegate and a gold medalist at the provincial regional Science Fair for her work in carbon capture and environmental chemistry. She also achieved a top provincial placement in the 2026 Canadian Association of Physicists competition.

Beyond the sciences, Mr. Speaker, Makenzie is an award-winning writer, receiving the 2025 Newfoundland and Labrador Arts and Letters Award for Poetry. She is also a high-performance athlete, representing Newfoundland and Labrador at the 2025 Canada Games in swimming and excels in triathlon. She earned the 2025 Premier's Athletic Award and was named the PCSP Athlete of the Year.

Makenzie has volunteered for three years as a swim instructor with the Special Olympics, for over 150 hours of dedicated service, and raised over \$10,000 for local charities. She's also received the 100th anniversary of women achieving the right to vote and hold public office scholarship. Makenzie's leadership also extends nationally through her work with the RCMP's Youth Advisory Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I wish her well tomorrow when she takes her driver's licence test and gives her parents a much-needed break from all the driving around.

I would like all Members in the House to rise and offer sincere congratulations to Makenzie Wishart.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Does the Member for Ferryland have leave of the House for a Member's statement?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you. Speaker.

Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to pay tribute to Alice Kavanagh of Calvert, an incredible woman who lived a full life and was a renowned female fish harvester.

Ms. Kavanagh was a woman who did just about everything. Whether it was providing for her family of 15, volunteering in her community or fishing on the water, hauling in and mending gillnets, seeing to the fish flakes, lobbying for women's rights or sawing log after log at the family sawmill, nothing was too much for Ms. Kavanagh. She did all this and more, and she believed in the importance of doing one's part, as stated in her obituary.

Ms. Kavanagh was just shy of her 95th birthday when she passed, and I think it's safe to say she left a positive and cherished mark on this world and on many people. I've been lucky enough to know many of her family members.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in the celebration of the incredible and memorable life of Alice Kavanagh, a trailblazer for all women working in and contributing to our province's fishing industry.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Does the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows have leave for a Member's statement, also?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. BARBOUR: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the extraordinary bravery of a young woman from the Town of Castor River North, Ms. Shealene Bailey.

Ms. Bailey, who currently is pursuing a career change from massage therapy to nursing, displayed a remarkable courage and selflessness during a recent emergency in her community.

While attending the scene of a house fire, Ms. Bailey became aware that a young boy had fallen into icy harbour waters and was in grave danger. Despite the extreme cold and the risk of her own safety, and time not on her side, she removed her boots, entered the water and swam to the struggling child, putting his life before her own. Using a rope from the wharf, Ms. Bailey secured the boy and ensured he was safely pulled to shore. She then held him until paramedics arrived and he was placed in their care.

Speaker, this heroic act is a powerful example of compassion, quick thinking and courage under pressure. I ask all Members of this House to join me in recognizing Shealene Bailey for her outstanding bravery and service to her community.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, today I rise to recognize the week of May 11 to 17 as National Nursing Week, and to celebrate nurses throughout our province.

From clinics and hospitals to care teams and long-term care homes, nurses bring a diverse range of skills and a deep compassion for the patients they serve, often working in challenging situations with the highest standards of professionalism and ethics.

Our government knows that to invest in our nurses is to invest in better health outcomes for all of us.

That is why we are proud to make investments to support nurses in *Budget 2026*. We are delivering on our promise to establish a provincial nursing travel team, staffed by local unionized nurses, to reduce our reliance on agency nurses. We are investing in expanding our nurse practitioner funding model to provide increased access to primary health care, with no out-of-pocket cost to patients. We are making significant investments in the recruitment of more nurses, and in supporting the health and well-being of nurses who work in our health care system.

Last month, I had the opportunity to attend the graduation ceremony of our practical nurses who are beginning their nursing careers.

Speaker, I invite all hon. Members to join me in thanking and appreciating nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, and I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

I join the minister is recognizing National Nursing Week and thanking nurses across Newfoundland and Labrador for the care they provide every day.

Speaker, we all know that supporting nurses is not a new challenge. Pressures in our health care system have been building for years, and nurses have been carrying much of that weight. That is why this year's budget gave an opportunity to respond to those realities; however, we are hearing clearly from nurses and their representatives that key gaps remain.

The Registered Nurses' Union has said this budget does not adequately address retention or violence in the workplace. Those are not secondary issues; they are central to whether nurses can stay in the profession and feel safe at work. This budget missed the chance to fully meet that commitment. Nurses deserve to see stronger, concrete action to support them.

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 also appreciate the nurses who we count on during some of our most vulnerable moments. Let's show our gratitude with concrete actions. Let's ease the strain on the system by offering nursing students a job during their first year of study, pay for the work terms of all nursing students and let's tackle workplace violence in the system by creating a health sector safety council.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Before we get into questions, just something we can all agree on, congratulations to Alex Newhook for scoring the winning goal for the Montreal Canadiens last night.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: I know all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are proud, so to all the Canadian fans across the country: You're welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I'm a Leaf's fan, but I'll cheer for him anyway.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

J. HOGAN: Speaker, now we'll get to the questions, where we'll disagree, I'm sure.

The Conservatives are finally agreeing to release the Bay du Nord benefits agreement today, but, of course, after Question Period because they don't want questions asked here today.

The Premier knows what's in the agreement, so can he confirm how many guaranteed jobs there are, and if they are of the same quality and pay as there would have been if they hadn't abandoned their campaign commitment to get guaranteed topside work?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I can't not address the preamble.

As a Montreal Canadiens fan, I am very thankful for the Leader of the Opposition to bring up the Montreal Canadiens and our own great Alex Newhook. It was a pleasure to watch that game.

I can also tell you it's a pleasure to be able to stand up here today and talk about a Bay du Nord agreement that's actually going to see, not only projects completed, but a new industry created. That's one of the things that we're going to do: create a new industry for Newfoundland and Labrador with our floating drydock and that will employ thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians long after the cycle of boom and bust is over.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, just so the Premier is aware, the theme for my questions will be guarantee. The word "guarantee" will be asked in all these questions, and I haven't heard one answer where there's a guarantee of any of these jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Now we learn today that the Conservatives are spending over \$2 million on a prefeasibility study into the drydock and still with no guarantee that Bay du Nord will proceed. How did they fall for this when Equinor has said about the project – and I quote – we can never guarantee anything?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

What I can guarantee is that this deal is much better than the deal the Liberals

wanted to do in 2018. I can guarantee that we're looking at 430 million barrels and they were looking at 300 million barrels. I can guarantee from an expenditure standpoint we were looking at \$26.9 billion in the life of field; they were looking at \$10.9 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: I can guarantee from a fabrication standpoint, we're looking at 15,400 tons of fabrication; they were looking at 5,000. I can guarantee under R & D, we were looking at \$100 million; they were looking at \$75 million. I can guarantee you from a fabrication fund, we're getting \$200 million; they were getting zero. I can guarantee you that 31.3 million person-hours is what we had; they had 23.3 million person-hours.

Speaker, I can go on with this, but I think the answers are in –

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: Speaker, I'll save the minister some trouble from reading from his document. I'll ask him to table it when Question Period is over so we can all see exactly what he's talking about.

The Minister of Energy today admitted that there's a 25 per cent variance over his estimate for the drydock. Industry leaders say it's likely to cost \$700 million or more. Today, he said he's hoping the federal government or other private dollars will help close this massive gap – hoping.

Does he have any guarantees for these investments?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I can give a couple of more guarantees. I guarantee that our numbers are more solid than the numbers were for the new hospital they wanted to build. I can guarantee that this project is far more feasible than the World Energy GH2 project that they wanted to sign with their hydrogen and their giveaways.

Speaker, we are looking at building a drydock and we have not even gotten to feed. The EOI is out right now, as I explained this morning, and when it comes back, it will give us a clear path on the direction we're taking with this. That feed study will help open the doors for new industry in this province, one that hasn't been seen for many, many years. When we get that, it will be made public, no different than everything else.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

To summarize, what we've heard is they've signed away the topsides work that were guaranteed during an election in exchange for a partial investment in a drydock, for which they don't know the full cost, don't know how many job numbers will arise and don't know if there's any work guaranteed to flow from it.

So why didn't the minister get a guarantee from Equinor that they will refund any of these upfront costs if they decide not to proceed with Bay du Nord?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll go back to the other guarantees: 95 per cent of all subsea work, at a minimum, will be carried out in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Life of benefits for the entire project, first time ever, is guaranteed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Speaker, this is the first of many things for Newfoundland and Labrador to come under this administration. When they get the agreement today, they can have a look at it and they'll come back and they'll say the same thing we're saying. This is a good deal for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and it's a good deal for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador, and it's a good signal that we're sending to the rest of Canada, the rest of the world.

The federal Liberals like it, the building trades like it and the people that are going to be employed love it.

SPEAKER: 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.

As we said all along, we want it to proceed as well, and we hope we like it when we finally get the chance to read the agreement and see the details. Very interested to see how many times the word guarantee is in the agreement.

Equinor has said publicly that companies in Asia have the competitive advantage for topside construction. How can local companies who pay good wages to our

workers hope to compete with that without any government guarantees?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Speaker, in both agreements that the Liberals had previously, there was no topside work. We've got a guarantee that people here in this province have the ability to bid, and if they can meet the budget and calendar, they will get the work. We have four companies that had pre-qualified; the indications are, they are all going to be bidding this project and looking to be competitive with Asia.

We have an opportunity in this province to bring an industry forward that sat dormant for the last 10 years under their watch. We are not going to allow that to happen. We are moving forward into new industries, into deep-sea prospects and into a floating dry dock that will bring work for years to come.

Speaker, I don't know how anyone can pick badness out of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I hope these companies are successful, but rather than having to go through the bid process, I'm sure they would have appreciated if the government guaranteed that they would get the job rather than companies in Asia.

As Newfoundlanders and Labradorians dove into the budget over the weekend, they realized it's not that deep. They've done very little, this government, to help address affordability.

Can the Premier explain how he thinks about \$20 a month is enough to help with, in his words, the soaring cost of living?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition stated last week he was talking to the prime minister. I'm surprised the prime minister didn't inform him how well he liked the dry dock and the Bay du Nord.

On the budget, anytime you can put out \$200 million into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, that is a good lever to push to address affordability in Newfoundland and Labrador. He can drill down and minimize one aspect of the \$200 million, but if he's done the math, \$200 million put out to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador helps affordability.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I did the math and I know that most of the \$200 million were Liberal initiatives over the last number of years, not Conservative issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: The Finance Minister told the Board of Trade here, on Friday, that if the price of oil remains elevated, more affordability issues could come later this year.

Can the minister tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians what those measures are, and what price oil will have to be at and for how long before he decides to help

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with the cost of affordability issues?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I'm not sure how well the Leader of the Official Opposition did his math. He stood in this House last week and said: Liberal initiatives, \$110 million – grossly incorrect. Not even half of that because they never budgeted for the permanent gas tax reduction. It wasn't in the budget, but it's certainly in his \$110 million that he had.

We will look at affordability issues going forward, because we know that good governance says that we must be in tune with what the people are experiencing out there. We will certainly do that. If he were at the Board of Trade meeting, he would have found out that we've got it under our analysis in the department.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I didn't do it in the budget because it wasn't my budget to do, but if the Minister of Finance would like to hand over that responsibility for next year, I'm sure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians would appreciate it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

J. HOGAN: Brent crude is now trading today at more than \$113 a barrel. What specific oil price threshold is the minister waiting for before he acts?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, I addressed the Board of Trade, and we had a really good session. We talked about financial pressures that the province is under, and that was as the result of the last 10 years of governance with the increase in the debt, the increase in the deficit that we're experiencing now.

That has got to be addressed for us to make sure that we prepare for the future. Not only the Future Fund, which we agree that saving is very important, but we've got to make sure that we've got our debt and our deficit under control to reduce our borrowings in going forward.

We will address affordability issues in the near future.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

J. HOGAN: To be clear, we do not agree on the process that they are taking with the Future Fund. In fact, we adamantly disagree with the approach this government is taking to not save for the future.

Has the minister admitted that the current affordability measures in this budget are inadequate; only will be changed unless oil revenues continue to increase?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Absolutely not; they are not inadequate.

How can you say that when we're putting out \$200 million into the pockets of

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? How can you stand and make that comment, to know that that is an insufficient amount that we put out to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Mr. Speaker, he said, when he was asked, as far as what he's going to watch for in our budget, he didn't mention affordability. He wanted to know what percentage and how we were going to deliver on the promises that were in our blue book. It wasn't affordability. It was whether we were going to meet, and we met that target of 80 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Well, Minister, in your own words, you said you would do more for affordability.

So now I'm asking, if you say this is enough, that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should be satisfied with what you've done so far, why would you say you will do more in the future? It can't be both. Is it enough or is it not enough? Tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians the truth.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I want to state and restate again – I think the Leader of the Opposition might have understood that I said that we put \$2 million out into the pockets of Newfoundland and Labradorians?

I want to make sure that he's clear this time, before any radio interview tomorrow morning, \$200 million in excess out –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: – into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

How much would the Leader of the Opposition expect for good affordability measures? How much more was he expecting? In excess of \$300 million, \$400 million?

But we will keep an eye, Speaker, on affordability because that's good governance.

SPEAKER: The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: What I'm hearing is that the minister said \$200 million is enough for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and if he wants an answer from me, I would have done more for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: I can certainly tell you, with the costs going up of oil, \$120 a barrel, I certainly would have had the revenue to do more for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as well.

In its commentary on the budget, DBRS Bond Rating Agency said – quote – with Quebec's next provincial election scheduled for October, it remains highly uncertain if Newfoundland and Labrador will realize the fiscal and economic benefits previously anticipated from the Churchill Falls deal.

Since, now, we've been decided to be stuck with the 1969 deal, because of this government's indecision, what is the government's plan to make up for the loss

of hundreds of billions of dollars and thousands of jobs?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me talk about the budget and talk about what's in it.

The minister talks about the \$200 million, but I'll tell you the difference between the PC government and the former Liberal government. When we do things, we make them permanent, like a permanent reduction in gas tax.

That's exactly what we have done. We turned around; all of their initiatives had expiry dates and, let's be clear, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador expired the Liberal government in October. We've taken over, and we're going to make sure that we continue to deliver for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I don't apologize for not having permanent things, because you need to be flexible and you need to change and you need to adapt as the world around us changes. They're stuck with old policies and they won't open their eyes and see Newfoundlanders and Labradorians need more help.

The bond rating agencies have noted the Conservative changes to the Future Fund legislation – and I quote – removes the incentive to reduce our reliance on resource royalties to fund future program spending.

So I ask the minister: Why is he doubling down on spending volatile oil revenues instead of building a stable fiscal future for all of us?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I'm glad he's getting some of our lingo in our campaign: all of us. Very nice.

Morningstar DBRS states "Newfoundland's exposure to global commodity prices presents material fiscal upside." They also state: Energy prices present a material upside risk to the province's forecast.

Mr. Speaker, not in a year previous to this year did the previous government in their 10-year reign ever put in that much in affordability measures into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – \$200 million, have not seen it in the last 10 years.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

On budget day, the Minister of Health said – and I quote – and for me now, in the Ministry of Health, you'd think things would have improved. In actual fact, if it continues to go on, I would suggest that people in Northern Labrador try to find a lawyer and actually have a class action lawsuit for the failures and sue me, the Minister of Health; sue the government.

I ask the minister: What real solutions are you working on to avoid a class action lawsuit against yourself and the government?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, in actual fact, I was really disappointed that the clip that got played cut out the first part where I talked about the solutions that we are actually putting in place. I'm holding myself to account because I have lived experience with the harms the gaps in services have done to the people of Northern Labrador.

One of the things we're going to do is rework that RT that's so archaic it's got the old name. The R stands for radio, Speaker. That's how old that office is. There are so many gaps when it comes to communication and support, but we will put the solutions in place. We are actually in the works. We have engaged with Indigenous leaders. We've engaged with the people that are actually –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

The minister doesn't seem to like answering these questions, but I'll remind her that she made a point of doing this on budget day. Quote: I know it's budget day. I know that means a lot of this messaging will get lost and I said I can't accept being the, you know, the head, the Minister of Health, while my people continue to be treated like this. It's unacceptable.

Why did she say such comments about her own efforts and her own government on budget day? Was she trying to detract from their lacklustre budget?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Actually, the transcript of my interview was over three pages long, Speaker. I wish they would have actually played everything and I wish they wouldn't have misled the public, because people in my district were concerned. Because of all the work we're actually putting in place, you're going to see real changes for patients travelling in Northern Labrador.

But, Speaker, in actual fact, this budget is going to address all of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's not just my district. I'm the minister for all of the province when it comes to health care services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, we're actually changing a lot of the services available. When people are calling and looking for answers, we're actually changing the way people will be addressed. So they'll get actually answered –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Just a week after the minister had to delete an AI-altered image and said she regretted using AI to edit a photo, the Conservative government posted an image of a woman

obviously edited with artificial intelligence to promote vaccinations.

Can the Premier explain?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would suggest that they go back and look at some of their own social media. I would also suggest they go back and look at some of the reports that they had published. I would say that those reports, when we're talking about digits costing seven figures – not fingers.

There was a picture that came out. It was a mistake. It was done by public servants. For them to come in and talk about public servants in that manner again, after they've done the same thing time and time again, we know it's a problem.

We're going to fix the problem point blank, simple. AI is creating issues inside of government; government is looking for solutions to fix it. They've ought to look at their own reports that they've put out that cost millions of dollars and led us down this trail.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

The Royal Bank of Canada says that *Budget 2026* abandons plans to reduce spending and instead increases expenditures by \$120 million.

Why has this government walked away from its own commitment to control spending?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I think the hon. Member was at the Board of Trade when I spoke on Friday and I think the reception was very good. We haven't abandoned anything and I think we made it quite clear in every comment we've had that we need to address the debt that they left us. We need to address the deficit that they left us. In fact, they created more debt in 10 years than any government prior to that, and that is a fact.

We will address it because we are the government now and we look forward to making sure that we do address it. We've been clear on the record that we will, but good governance makes sure that we look after the people as well. That we will do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, the government can't have it both ways. The minister said he has an insatiable desire to save money, an insatiable desire to reduce debt, an insatiable desire to reduce deficit. He increased the debt. He extended the deficit for years.

Will the minister admit today that their fiscal plan is not just offtrack but has never been on track?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: As asked, the Opposition who were government for the past 10 years –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: We've had six months but no excuse from this side. We will –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: We will address.

One of the things that we found in our plan and we were surprised that there was half a billion dollars worth of programming that weren't financed for in the budget, and that caught us off guard because we didn't know, when we came in, that we would have programs that were not financed in the out-years. It caused us a little concern but then again, Speaker, we will address it because good governance will do that. Watch us do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour says "this budget falls short at presenting a bold, and forward-thinking plan for the future of our province." They point to inadequacies on worker safety, labour relations, workers' rights and no plan to create a comprehensive labour-market strategy.

Despite high oil prices and high deficits, why has this Conservative government presented such an underwhelming budget for our province's workers?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: Mr. Speaker, that's a very important question. I'd like to thank the Member opposite.

Last week I attended the National Day of Mourning. I placed a ribbon. He was there with me. I'm not here to play games with people's lives. I take the health and safety of employees in this province very, very, very serious.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: I served in trades on three different worksites where there were fatalities. I've dissected safety plans. I'll continue to dissect safety plans while I'm here, and I will continue to make sure that people are protected when they go to work and come home to their families in the evening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Speaker, CUPE says their overall concern is that the budget does not address the low pay of public sector workers, and they feel the recruitment and retention crisis is probably going to come out even worse.

Why does this budget fail to address the low wages driving workers out of the system?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, I find it disconcerting that the previous government that left us with the debt that we have are wondering now how we're not adding on to salaries.

We would certainly like to do more, but I think most of the lending agencies, the bond

rating agencies, would know that we are limited and constrained by the amount of debt and deficit that the previous government left us.

You can rest assured we will work being fiscally conservative, but we will address the pressures that are out there over due course. We've stated that we're not going to do everything in year one, and I would hope that the Opposition heard that. We said that several times. We will address the pressures that exist.

SPEAKER: The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier ran on an election commitment to support rotational workers with a \$2,000 tax credit that is notably absent, and we've heard from workers who feel betrayed.

Why is the government now abandoning its commitment they made in their blue book and at the election now that they've got their vote?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, it genuinely hurts me to hear that question, because I –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

C. PARDY: Speaker, I, personally, not only the Premier, but many of my colleagues, would have said that we've got four years to implement our platform. Six months we've been in and now they're picking out one. No mention, no celebratory comment about the 80 per cent of the items that were

addressed, putting \$226 million in people's pockets, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but he picks out one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: We know that the rotational workers are getting the benefit from the basic exemption amount. They're getting that. The other one is still on the books for future years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

Co-author of the Health Accord, Sister Elizabeth Davis, discussed the importance of allocating resources to climate change as it impacts our physical health. Extreme heat is a serious danger to our health, especially seniors.

Ontario is the only province that currently legislates air conditioning for long-term care homes, so I ask the minister: Will your government bring in legislation for all facilities that support our seniors so they and the workers can stay healthy in the summer?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, and the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

We are constantly evolving when it comes to climate action plans and making sure that, especially, our seniors and our most vulnerable throughout our societies are

taken care of when it comes to this moving forward.

With our CEEP Program and SAG Program and other programs throughout my Municipal Affairs portfolio, we are making sure that warming centres and cooling centres are set up across the province to ensure that as well.

Make no mistake, we are working on the climate action plan moving forward. That's going to take some time. That's going to take some deliberation, but we will deliver a climate action plan for Newfoundland and Labrador, for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, which suit our needs right here. We are constantly looking out for our seniors within our society.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

We still haven't heard the timing, when the climate action plan promised by government will be released.

Under an NDP government, British Columbia brought in a free portable air conditioner program for seniors whose health is directly impacted by climate change and extreme heat.

I ask the minister: Will there be measures to ensure that the health and welfare of our seniors impacted by climate change are prioritized in their plan?

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Like I said, we are constantly evolving when it comes to the department. We will be achieving our goals in 2030 for a 30 per cent reduction. That's something that we're looking at in the future.

But make no mistake, we know where the gaps are. It's going to take some money; it's going to take some time to get there but, make no mistake, we are looking after our seniors and our most vulnerable in our societies.

We know that a climate action plan is needed, and we know that with the ever-growing greenhouse gases throughout this world and other countries, Newfoundland and Labrador are at the best levels we've ever had since 1994. We'll continue this trajectory.

I look forward to sitting with the Members opposite, to hearing their ideas and their concerns moving forward, but the seniors and the most vulnerable are our main priority.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, the Minister of Finance stated several times last week that raising the basic personal exemption will put \$91 million into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I ask the minister: How much can individual Newfoundlanders and Labradorians expect to see in their pockets as a result of that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, \$91 million was the cost of putting in the measure to put money out into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians through the basic exemption amount. I know that, if I had more time, I'd like to repeat it six times so the Opposition will get it clearly – \$91 million that we've put out.

What the question is, the question asked –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: – it would be \$341, the target amount, that most of the 285,000 tax filers would receive – \$341.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, the answer we got is \$332, less than the price of a cup of coffee a day.

By contrast, individual Newfoundlanders and Labradorians received \$596 from the Canada Carbon Rebate, that the minister's party opposed, and \$715 if they lived in a rural area. A family of four received \$1,192 or \$1,430 if they lived in a rural area.

I ask the minister: How does he expect individual Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to absorb the cost of living with so little?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's pretty bold to embrace the carbon tax and not understand what that means to the

cost of groceries, to the cost of gas, to the everyday cost of living in this province.

Also, coming from an individual whose leader wants to turn the taps off for oil and gas. There will be no refund on anything if that were to happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

L. PARROTT: They say that they have a platform that can pay for absolutely everything, when they don't even understand what the cost means or the consequences are for taking stuff away from it. When you supported the carbon tax in Canada, and you didn't understand that it was disproportionate for Newfoundland and Labrador, certainly for rural Newfoundland and Labrador, then you did not read what it was.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, and Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I would like to table, as we had announced, the Benefits Agreement for Bay du Nord.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, and Minister of Energy and Mines.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I would also like to table the Royalties Agreement for Bay du Nord.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

The hon. the Government House Leader, and Minister of Energy and Mines.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I would also like to table the Royalty Agreement for Bay du Nord.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I would also like to table the Equity Option Framework for Bay du Nord.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Any further 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, it gives me pleasure to give notice that I will, on tomorrow, introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000, No. 2, Bill 17.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law, Bill 18.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

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

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate, the following private Member's resolution – food fishery, seven-day access for residents.

WHEREAS the food fishery is a long-standing cultural tradition in Newfoundland and Labrador, deeply rooted in the province's heritage and coastal way of life; and

WHEREAS the food fishery provides residents with access to locally sourced, sustainable food and supports for food security, particularly, in rural and coastal communities; and

WHEREAS current federal regulations limit the food fishery to designated days and periods, restricting reasonable access for residents due to work schedules, weather conditions and other practical considerations; and

WHEREAS adjacent jurisdictions on comparable fisheries regimes provide more

flexible access while maintaining conservation objectives; and

WHEREAS the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have demonstrated a strong commitment to responsible harvesting and stewardship of marine resources;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House call upon the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to advocate to the Government of Canada, specifically the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, to expand the food fishery for Newfoundland and Labrador residents to permit access seven days per week during the established seasonal period; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such advocacy emphasize the importance of conservation-based management, including appropriate catch limits, monitoring and enforcement measures to ensure the sustainability of cod and other ground fish stocks; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this hon. House affirm its support for policies that balance cultural traditions, food security and conservation in the management of the province's fisheries resources.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

This will be the PMR presented on Wednesday, May 6.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition calls for the immediate implementation of GPS ankle bracelet monitoring systems for intimate partner violence offenders.

WHEREAS our court dockets are full of breaches relating to the conditional release orders, many of which relate to intimate partner violence; and

WHEREAS real-time active GPS ankle monitoring has a proven track records to reduce breaches, including violent breaches, when used with IPV accused; and

WHEREAS victim notification alarms will give victims precious seconds to call for help or seek safe refuge; and

WHEREAS other provinces use ankle monitoring programs, including Alberta that recently committed \$4.1 million over three years to expand its electronic monitoring program; and

WHEREAS the Conservative government campaigned on making communities safer for all of us.

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 implement an active GPS ankle bracelet monitoring program as an option for courts to impose on accused dangerous or repeat intimate partner violence offenders.

This is a topic, Speaker, that has been in the media for quite some time. I know when I was minister of Women and Gender

Equality, I struck a Cabinet committee, a task force, and we heard from stakeholders. One group called for this and actually had a really good slideshow that showed statistics about in other jurisdictions, where these are in place, it actually reduces the number of offences.

That said, the current Minister of Justice, of course, the Member for Harbour Main, when on this side of the House, called for this implementation immediately and actually went as far as to say it's political will to make it happen. Now we respectfully call on her; she is in a position to make that happen.

Unfortunately, we did not see any mention or any allocation in this year's budget for ankle monitoring. We asked the question as well in Estimates. We know that it's something that can make a difference of life or death. We do know that there are trials currently before the province involving intimate partner violence.

So I call on the Member and the government, of course, to do what they can to implement ankle monitoring as soon as possible. She's in a position to do it, so let's see it happen immediately.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

L. STOYLES: These are the reasons and background for the petition:

WHEREAS the education of students in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is the responsibility of the provincial government; and

WHEREAS Canada is a bilingual nation and families are able, under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to access education in either of the official languages; and

WHEREAS many schools in Newfoundland and Labrador do not deliver K-to-12 French Immersion programs; and

WHEREAS there are incidents where students in French Immersion programming can't access the provincial school busing to attend schools; and

WHEREAS students are required to attend schools outside their catchment area to access French Immersion programming; and

WHEREAS those students aren't eligible for busing, which presents unnecessary challenges facing to access the French Immersion programming.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED 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 provide the necessary funding so families are not facing unnecessary challenges accessing French Immersion programming for their children.

Speaker, over the past number of years, and especially this past year, I've had a number of parents in my district that couldn't put their children in French because they're both working families and they can't take time off work to drive their children every single day in the morning and pick them up in the evening.

Speaker, this affects all 40 districts here in the province and it certainly needs to be looked at, especially with today's technology and computers. It's something that really needs to be looked at, even a pilot project. I spoke to the minister back last year, and we were looking at putting a pilot project in place to look at this. There are a large number of children, some of them can get courtesy seats, but most of them, courtesy seats are not available for them to get it.

I've seen it first hand as grandparents when my oldest grandson attended school. He lives in Bay Bulls and, in order for him to do a French Immersion program, he had to go to the Goulds, which was the closest school. We had to drive him back and forth from Bay Bulls to the Goulds every day. Without us and his other grandfather driving him, my grandchildren would not have been able to access and be in French Immersion.

My grandson is now in University doing languages. He actually speaks three languages.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education for a response.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the Member for the petition. As she pointed out, this has been a number of years on the go, and it's a serious issue. Children certainly deserve their education and, by our own Charter of Rights, deserve it in one of our official languages or both.

I will say that, only recently, we have announced a pilot for a busing in terms of registration system. This registration system is designed to determine who is, actually, riding on the buses and where there are some efficiencies that can be had.

That's being piloted in 17 locations. I would hope that as we go through that, we'll be able to free up spaces and look more closely at other demands on the busing system.

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

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker.

My petition today will be on the paving and upgrading of the road from Point May to Fortune. These are the reasons and background to this petition:

WHEREAS the highway from Point May to Fortune is in deplorable condition; and

WHEREAS emergency vehicles travel this road; and

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

WHEREAS this road is causing extensive damage to vehicle;

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 provide the necessary funding for paving and upgrading of the road from Point May to Fortune.

Mr. Speaker, this section of road is in my district; it's certainly a road that's used a lot. It's used by people mostly to get back and forth to work, but also to get groceries, banking, for health care and the list goes on. It is, certainly, something that I get asked about when I go out. When is this going to be done and so on?

By the way, it was a Phase III to what we had planned. These people in these communities, they rely on the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure and Public Procurement. They rely on this department for paving. They don't have the dollars in their budgets to do that paving themselves so we, as a government, have to do those roads.

People living in rural Newfoundland, we need to ensure that they have the same positive things that happen in their community. We have to ensure that our residents can get back and forth to work safely and enjoy living in their own

communities. That's what living in rural Newfoundland is all about. People want to be around family. It's where they grew up. So we need to put some extra funding for our road infrastructure out there.

I would just like for the minister to agree to send out his engineers and officials to take a look at the roads out there that I have been talking about to see if we can get them on some sort of a priority list. That \$66 million that was taken out of the budget this year could have done all of the work in rural Newfoundland and Labrador that needs to get done, and I'm sure I'm not the only MHA who has those problems.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

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.

SPEAKER: Motion 1.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio. I believe she's got about 57 minutes or something like that left on the clock.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

SPEAKER: There you go, 58 minutes, 32 seconds.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I very much appreciate it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: I note that, unfortunately, I don't have time to review the Bay du Nord agreement, because otherwise I could opine on that for three hours, or an hour left today. I look forward to reading that tonight. Hopefully, it is as excellent as the government says it is. We will have to wait and look at that tonight. Unfortunately, I don't have that for today.

I do want to reiterate what a privilege it is to stand here and speak to the budget. You know I represent the people of Mount Scio. Obviously, in Mount Scio, there are voters of all parties, so I also represent the people who didn't vote for me, as we all do. I think it's important, as the Official Opposition, that I do take my time in making sure that there is sufficient information on the record about the opposition to the government's budget. That's what I'm intending to do today.

I'm also very fortunate to have a break between my speaking periods so I can do additional research and talk about a few things that I didn't talk about before. I got the opportunity to do additional research and –

AN HON. MEMBER: Always good.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, and I have many new points that I will raise today.

I do think it's important to acknowledge that the overall sentiment of the government's budget is underwhelming. They had very high promises and, as I mentioned last week, I would encourage you to reflect on, when a Conservative elector knocked on your door and asked you for your vote, what types of things did they promise you? Do you think that this budget is delivering them

for you, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

I think the VOCM Question of the Day also says that the government's budget is underwhelming. They told you they were going to lower your taxes. They told you that they would implement a rotational worker tax credit. They are saving Newfoundlanders and Labradorians \$28 a month with increasing the personal exemption and, so far, since we've been here today, in Question Period, we heard a lot about – I believe the Minister of Finance was saying, okay, well that's \$200 million in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and –

B. DAVIS: It was \$91 million.

S. STOODLEY: Oh, \$91 million – thank you – in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, which is great, but I would say, and many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians say, for a party that their election platform was lower taxes, \$28 a month is not really lower taxes. It is, but it's not really what people voted for, is what we've heard, Speaker.

They are saving small business owners, if you get \$100,000 profit, \$500. Fair. That's the same change that we introduced in 2024. We introduced that same amount of change.

Are they lowering the gas tax? No. Did they stop the sugar tax? No, they didn't. When you filed your taxes last month, did you get any of this money back? No. You'll get that money back next year, that's the \$28, or your employer will withhold fewer taxes perhaps or you'll just get more back.

They told you that they would improve health care. Do you feel as though this government is working towards doing that? Do you feel like your government has a plan to do that? I would say absolutely not.

I'd like to remind everyone that one of the first things they did was decide to pay an

overpriced political staffer \$275,000 for a part-time job to give them advice on this budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. STOODLEY: There are a few additional things, going through the government's mandate again, and I'd like to start with the Physical Activity Tax Credit.

That was one that we introduced; I'm very proud that we introduced that. It's not a huge financial savings for taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador, but it is something. I believe the maximum is about \$140 a year. I have a child and I have a gym membership, personally, so I always make sure to keep track and keep receipts for every time I take my child swimming, every time we do anything, and I have it in a spreadsheet. At the end of the year, I can put in my Physical Activity Tax Credit line and, I believe, it's up to \$140 – it might be \$170 – I can get back for the Physical Activity Tax Credit.

The government committed in their government mandate, in their lower taxes section, the fourth bullet, that they would make more families and individuals eligible for the Physical Activity Tax Credit by allowing them to claim fitness gear like sneakers and bikes. That won't be in this budget.

I know the minister said that they have 80 per cent of their commitments in this budget. I'm still doing the math on that, and when I get the number, I will bring it back to this House. That's not one that we've seen this year. Now, that would have cost a little bit more because I'm assuming more people would have taken advantage of it if they did cover sneakers and bikes, which would have potentially lead to people being healthier, exercising more and spending more time outside. That was a tax commitment that the government did not deliver on in their first budget.

I've also heard the poverty reduction and prevention strategy will come this fall, I believe. Fair. I also understand that the government are ending their 106 Horizons facility, even though End Homelessness has successfully transitioned 40 chronically homeless individuals to independent living in the private market. I know members of the not-for-profit community who spend their whole lives assisting people in homelessness have very strong opinions about the government's decision to cancel that contract with no plan in place for how to support the 75 residents who are still in the process of moving and transitioning to independent living.

I'd also like to note, I was Minister of Housing for a short while and I did have the privilege of touring that facility, there's a partnership with First Light there. There's a smudging room and there are Indigenous residents. There are many residents at 106 Horizons. I reflect on, and it was very important to me that we keep the needs in mind of those residents, and that decisions were made to not cause additional trauma.

I don't want to go into that in too much detail, but I think it's incredibly important that the government take careful consideration for all the residents at 106 Horizons and the damage that they can do, and that is already being done by things in the media and decisions that they make. There are people living there, people with many different backgrounds, chronically homeless, and it is irresponsible, in my opinion, to have those people – I'm sure there will be some sort of a plan, but we don't know. We're looking forward to more information from the government.

I implore them to consider the different needs of the various extremely vulnerable residents who are there and work with the community to resolve that as respectfully as possible for the residents in that building and the staff who work there. I would encourage all government Members to do a tour of the facility.

I know that NLHS staff also deliver some services there. When I was minister, there were palliative patients living there; a complex mix of services being provided to Indigenous residents, to palliative care patients, a range of patients. I would encourage the government to carefully consider how they resolve or how they follow through with whatever their initiatives are related to the residents who live there. They do not need any further trauma. There are a lot of experts and services being provided to help these people get back on their feet, to improve their life in any small way, and the government has to give due attention and care to that. I think that is incredibly important.

I'd also like to talk about the MTAP program. The government indicated that they are going to update the eligibility criteria to allow more families and individuals to receive essential support from government programs.

In the budget, we didn't hear any additional eligibility, I don't think. I was reflecting; I can't think of any and I look forward to the Minister of Finance correcting me if that's not the case. We didn't hear any eligibility criteria that was changed. I'm not trying to shoot for the moon; I'm not saying they should be spending recklessly, but these are promises that they made and got elected. The fiscal forecast had been out a month and a half before this government put together their party platform, which is now the government's mandate.

So if they have updated the eligibility on any of their programs, I welcome the minister to enlighten us when he responds.

They also said that they would fully cover the cost of travelling for essential care when such services are not available in your region, and provide free parking at all health care facilities.

This government is not fully covering the cost of travelling for essential care when

such services are not available in your region. They are increasing the budget and keeping the eligibility and the criteria exactly the same. I think that's an important distinction for anyone who is in a vulnerable situation and is impacted.

You know, I'm very fortunate, I live very close to the major health care facility. It's in my district actually, but I know that in the 39 other districts and in rural districts and in Labrador – I can't imagine how stressful it is when you have a child, for example, and your child has strep throat or your child has some problem and you can't go to the Janeway emergency room. I cannot imagine what families go through like that.

So when someone knocks on your door and says that they are going to 100 per cent cover your cost to access medical services that are not available in your region, that could pull on your heartstrings. I can imagine how that would really have an impact on you and deciding what to do with your extremely important vote. I think it's important – very important – that electors in Newfoundland and Labrador get what they paid for when they elected the government.

This is something the government promised. They need to be transparent with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians about when they're going to fully cover the cost of traveling for essential care when such services are not available in your region.

They also are not providing free parking at all health care facilities, which I would say doesn't impact rural Newfoundland, but certainly impacts urban Newfoundland. It impacts all of my constituents.

Another one I'd like to bring up today is the government mandate, the party platform, says that they are going to fix the ineffective Liberal pay equity legislation and replace it with legislation that will truly see pay equity in the province. It also says, "We believe in equal pay for work of equal value." That's great. If they can strengthen the pay equity

legislation, that's great. I will support that, but I ask the minister how much in the fiscal forecast have they budgeted for increases to wages?

I'm 100 per cent for paying women, gender-diverse individuals, more money. Absolutely, a million per cent, but this government, they're paying a male political advisor more than the female chief of staff in the Premier's office. I think we should all reflect on that and the choices that this government are making. I wonder is there any female staff member in the Department of Health and Community Services making more than the part-time political advisor?

The government also committed to developing a robust policy analysis tool, which they will make publicly available. So I can't wait to see that. I can't wait to see the government's robust policy analysis tool for gender equality that they are going to make publicly available, which they promised to do in their election platform. I can't wait to see that.

I'd also like to talk about red tape a bit more. I note that the mandate says "a Wakeham PC government will: Aggressively reduce red tape to free businesses from outdated rules thus allowing them to thrive in all regions of the province." So I wonder if the minister, when he speaks, can tell us how they have reduced red tape for businesses. They said they are going to do that aggressively. I notice in their mandate, which the budget is their first instrument of their mandate, the first significant instrument, that they are going to reduce red tape aggressively. I don't disagree with that.

They also use the word urgently. They haven't done the urgent thing so I'm wondering about the aggressive things and when they're going to do the aggressive things. Because they did say they were urgently going to do a review of tuition at Memorial and the College of the North Atlantic. We haven't heard about that yet. If

they're going a review and when that happens.

I also note that they're extending the hours of the business help desk. So in the department, I believe, which has Industry and Skills in it, they have business navigators that we introduced, we introduced the business navigator, so they're going to extend those hours, I assume.

So I was wondering if the minister of any department can tell us what the revised office hours are for the business navigators. Have they been expanded yet? Is that in the fiscal forecast? What's the service level? Can people call them? Is it like eight to eight, nine to nine? The government mandate now talks about how business doesn't work nine to five. Fair, okay. So what are the hours? What is the weekend availability like and how much is that going to cost in the fiscal forecast?

They commit to adding a Rural Secretariat in the Executive Council. Okay. So I ask the Minister of Finance, is that in the budget? Have they added that in the budget? How many staff are going to be in the Rural Secretariat? That's not one that was in this budget.

They're adding a red tape reduction office and, in the mandate, they commit to doing a new intellectual property office. Okay, that's an extra three offices: a Rural Secretariat, a red tape reduction office and an intellectual property office. So that's like maybe 10, 15, 20 additional staff that they're going to add to the public service. I wonder which of those, if any, are in the fiscal forecast?

I know we've been in Estimates so far. We've got a lot of Estimates left. I'm not sure if we've heard about any of those offices, I don't think so, and how many extra staff have been added to the department to work in any of those three offices.

I still can't get over the ferries and I don't know if the ferries are in the fiscal forecast as well.

I did have the opportunity to attend the Minister of Finance's Board of Trade talk last week. It was a lovely event at a prominent hotel. I'd like to thank the Board of Trade for their commitment to businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador and to the metro region, in particular, and thank the minister for going to that audience and speaking to them and answering questions about the budget.

The minister did give a helpful overview of the main items in the budget and there were a few extra points I wanted to bring to this House's attention.

The first one that stuck out to me was when the – so thinking about the price of oil, a barrel of oil, in the budget. The former Finance minister, when I was in government, would always talk about we would use the price of a barrel of oil based on the average of so many oil forecasters. It was not the Minister of Finance's opinion, it wasn't our Cabinet's decision or opinion, it was the opinion of the gas forecasters. There are whole teams globally of experts that do that and that is their job to do that and they get paid to do that.

So I was very surprised to hear the Minister of Finance tell the Board of Trade that they're not using the number of the 11 budget forecasters. They've picked their own number, which is \$6 US a barrel below what the 11 forecasters came back and said. I quote: Most people said we are interested in seeing what the deficit is and we're very interested in seeing what the provincial government is going to pay for the cost of a barrel of oil in our budget.

Well, we put a cost of \$79 per US barrel – \$79. The 11 Brent crude forecasters settled at \$85, being fiscally conservative in our budgeting. We could've played with it by another couple of dollars; we went with \$75.

We gave ourselves lots of risk room under that budget.

Now I've heard one person say: Well, they're only patting themselves to look a bit better for the next fiscal forecast and that is not correct.

So that is what the Minister of Finance said to the Board of Trade. So I'm shocked that the government are coming up with their own price for a barrel of oil in the budget. The very important government documents – I don't have them on my desk – the revenue that comes from oil and gas is significant in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm just shocked to understand the minister told the Board of Trade that they went with a price, \$6 US a barrel below the price of the forecasters. They've chosen their own price. They're politicizing the price of a barrel of oil. I just don't understand it. I look forward to hearing more from the minister about that.

We also know the DBRS commentary from the bond rating agency, they talk about every dollar change in the price of oil, as per DBRS's comments, this week, in Newfoundland and Labrador, every dollar is worth \$33 million in revenue – \$198 million Canadian.

So the government has budgeted oil prices to be \$198 million Canadian lower than what the average of the 11 Brent crude forecasters say, which I can't even start to wrap my head around all of the financial implications of that for a government of a province in Canada. I can guess at a few, but the government has financial experts and I assume would have all been considerations that the government would have used.

That's \$198 million Canadian that they've underestimated getting from oil revenue based on the Brent crude forecasters. I really struggle with that, Speaker. They don't trust the forecasters. They were wrong last year. I'm not a forecaster. When we

were in government, we did not pretend to take the role of oil and gas forecasters. I would imagine that forecasters, last year, who made wrong estimates of incorrect forecasts, I'm sure that they are working very hard to correct any mistakes in their logic, in their formulas because that is their job.

I also wonder how much the government paid for these 11 Brent crude forecasters, which they should be, but for the government not to take the Brent crude price of oil from the experts and to come up with their own number is just – I can't even understand.

I wonder what the Auditor General would say about the government just picking a number – we could have gone either way – just picking a number that impacts the Treasury of Newfoundland and Labrador, impacts the credit rating agency. Then the number comes in better; they look better. Then the minister said, in an NTV interview, I believe, that they would, potentially, give out cheques in the fall. So if the oil price goes up, they're going to give out cheques.

They're politically manipulating the revenue numbers in the budget so that they'll look better, potentially, if the oil forecasters are wrong, and then they're going to send out cheques.

Now, we sent out cheques; there's nothing wrong with sending out cheques. There is, in my opinion, something fundamentally wrong about the government using their own subjective decision-making over the price of a barrel of oil in a sub-national government's budget in Canada. I fundamentally disagree with that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. STOODLEY: I think the government is setting an extremely dangerous precedent, that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador doesn't use the expert opinions for

oil prices. They know better than the Brent crude forecasters.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador budget doesn't – we know they're conservative, fair enough, but there are other ways to build in that fiscal decision-making and fiscal philosophy into a budget. They haven't presented a budget with a fiscal philosophy. They've manipulated the Brent crude price, the US dollar of a barrel of oil, by \$6 a barrel, which has a \$198 million Canadian impact to the Treasury, and they think on principle that's a better play than following the people whose job it is, who they're paying to get that expert advice from. I just think that's wild – wild.

Then, as I mentioned, the Minister of Finance – I quote from a news article I read – “hinted there could be more cost-of-living relief in the fall, perhaps even cheques for residents, if oil prices stay high in the fall.” Again, I'm not against cheques, but I am against manipulating the budget of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador so that you can artificially look better in a few months time, so that you can give out cheques.

We asked a question in Question Period: What is the magic number where the government is going to send out cheques? What happens if the price of oil is what the Brent crude forecasters say it will be? I mean, sure it won't be, it might be higher, it might be lower. Are they going to send out cheques then? It's one thing to have a political philosophy, fair enough, but manipulating the price of a barrel of oil in the budget is just ridiculous.

I'd also like to go to the Future Fund. That obviously has a huge budget impact because the government chose not to put in \$185 million, I believe, that legally was supposed to go in the Future Fund. Now we're changing the rules so they don't have to put last year's \$185 million in it so that they can spend that and/or put it on the deficit, to have a lower deficit.

I've heard the minister say many times they wanted to remove the ability to take money out of the fund for political reasons, and I'm okay with that. I personally support that 100 per cent and I can get behind that, but I think it's very hypocritical for the government to say that they're going to remove the ability to take money out of the fund for political reasons, yet they've just diverted \$185 million from going there for political reasons.

I wouldn't be able to say this if they had put last year's \$185 million in and then changed the law – fine – but they're not doing that. They are conveniently taking the money that should have gone in the Future Fund and using it for their own deficit, for their own budget. So, you know, they don't have the moral high ground there, Speaker.

When you think about all of the different financial elements that are going on here, they estimated the budget, but it's all based on a price of oil being \$6 US less for a barrel of oil, and that works out to \$198 million. They've taken \$185 million, which should have gone on the Future Fund, and put it on the deficit and/or spent it.

I do think Newfoundlanders and Labradorians need to seriously reflect on all these things that government are doing. They knocked on your door and promised you lower taxes, better health care and safer communities. Do you feel like they're doing that?

AN HON. MEMBER: Absolutely.

S. STOODLEY: Obviously Members opposite are going to say that, absolutely, but they're – it's just really funny, \$28 a month.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, you are saving \$28 a month as a result of the personal tax exemption. Fine. Is that what you had in mind when they knocked on your door and said lower taxes? I urge the Members opposite to call their constituents

and ask: Are you happy with the \$28 a month that you're saving as a result of our law change?

Then it's all a very mixed – I'm not a finance expert, but I really don't like the picture that we're painting here, with taking money out of the fiscal forecast, completely changing the makeup of the oil revenues, going with something that's \$6 US a barrel lower than the average of the \$11 Brent crude forecasters.

We never took one cent out of the Future Fund. I do want to reflect, like, who's being political with the province's finances now?

They just used \$185 million from the Future Fund – or are going to use after the law has changed, because it hasn't received Royal Assent yet. They're going to use \$185 million that would have and should have gone to the Future Fund, according to law, and make the deficit less, not as low. It's also bigger because they're politically interfering with the estimated price of a barrel of oil. It's just very bizarre.

So, thank you, Speaker.

I'd like pivot to a few other things. I'd like to go to Churchill Falls, and I know that the government announced today that the review of the independent review committee will be out on May 19. I'm glad they're making that available to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I note that the press release said the three panel members will be available on that day, so I ask, and hopefully we'll hear more about that, are the members going to come to this House? Are we going to do another special sitting? Are we going to be able to ask them questions directly? Are we going to have a full day to ask those panel members questions? That's kind of the sense I was reading from the press release, but I think it would be very important to be able to ask them questions.

Although, I really don't like the fact that the report comes out on the same day that those people will be available. We and the public and the media will have no time to review their report prior to them being available. We will only be able to ask very high-level questions, because we won't have the report. They're coming in the same day as the report is being made available. I really don't like that, Speaker, but I really am looking forward to hearing what they have to say.

Just going back to the Board of Trade event that the Minister of Finance did, the question and answers, the Minister of Finance said – quote – I often said that we are committed to getting a deal done on the Upper Churchill and Gull Island. We sincerely believe that it will be as good as the deal presented or better. That is what we would be committed to, and I know that we can't just make assumptions about revenue, but it would bring to us, and we will never capture revenue from that resource into our budget until the deal is signed. I can say to you, under the Finance Minister's watch, we are not going to add revenue on spec. It will be when the deal would be signed and done.

I think that's fine. The minister was very clear about his feelings about adding revenue on spec, so I guess that's why the minister did say that they added Bay du Nord revenue to the fiscal forecast. I haven't been able to review the document that was tabled today about the Bay du Nord deal, but hopefully we'll get a sense from that deal how much money was added to the fiscal forecast as a result of that agreement, because the minister did say that they put money in the fiscal forecast for Bay du Nord, and he's also saying we are not going to add any revenue on spec. So I look forward to reading that deal and learning more, maybe in Estimates, about how they've incorporated money from the Bay du Nord project into the fiscal forecast.

I do think it's very interesting that the minister says we believe that will be as good as the deal presented or better. I'm very glad to know that the government now, and the Minister of Finance, thinks that the MOU, the agreement that was made, was a sufficient, good deal for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, because that wasn't the message that we heard last year when we voted on the MOU.

That is incredibly important to this discussion because if we had proceeded with the MOU and the definitive agreements, the Minister of Finance would have, I believe, \$1.4 billion extra in the budget. The government would have been able to do a lot more to the affordability measures that they promised and the tax relief that they promised Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, like the Rotational Worker Tax Credit that they promised during the election and has not yet been delivered.

The minister said: We sincerely believe that it will be as good as the deal presented or better. So when the minister said that the government had received this report and it won't be made public until May 19, but I have to say that I, personally, take this comment as a sign that the report will be favourable to the deal, which is excellent because it is an excellent deal.

As a mother, as someone who represents so many constituents – and I know we all do – with families and children, I do worry about our job in Newfoundland and Labrador, whether you're Opposition or government, and how we impact the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. Like, 20, 30, 40 years in the future, how can we – so many things are out of our control, but so many things like the Future Fund are within our control, Speaker. How do we impact the lives of our grandchildren in Newfoundland and Labrador?

I've reflected so much on, let's say, my role in Cabinet. How can I make sure that in 20,

30, 40 years, Newfoundland and Labrador is a better place for people here because of our government and our role in this Legislature? So I think it's excellent. If the government and if the report comes back and says that they support the MOU, that's great, because we need that money. There's always an amount to say that, oh, we could do better. If the government can get a better deal, that's great, but we also need a lot of money. There's no point in never signing a deal and then never having the money. As the Minister of Finance knows, the debt is going up, the deficit, you know, it's difficult to stay under control.

So I really hope that the report comes back and it agrees with the MOU. We all spent four days here talking with experts day and night, until 9 every night for four days, answering all of our questions. I know our party, we stood by that deal. We think it was an excellent deal. I spoke with many constituents over the last year and a half now that we've been talking about this, about the deal, and I would say most support it. Some do not, but I would say most do support the deal.

I haven't heard the Members opposite comment on what they would change. So I look forward to reviewing the review that government has commissioned, but we won't have any time to read it – we won't have anymore than the day; we might have an hour – before the members are available to either the media. We don't know if they'll be available to us. We don't know if they'll come into this House. We don't know yet. So there's a lot of information that we don't know yet that they have not yet told us.

I'm glad the Minister of Finance says that they will proceed with the deal as good as or better, that's excellent, but I know in the government's mandate book, the blue book, it says: "Support the development of Churchill River and Gull Island project. However, given the information currently available, the proposed agreement with

Quebec cannot be supported in good conscience.” That’s what it says.

Again, I think that speaks to the fact that the government is not giving the public service a reliable, factual document that they can use to guide their work. Because the government is all over the place in terms of what they promised, which is fine, except their election platform is the government’s mandate. That is the book that all the deputy ministers have on their desk dictating their priorities on a daily basis.

So far, I guess, we have four or five things now that they’ve changed their mind on, that they’re not doing, which is their prerogative, but the public service aren’t going to know what to do on a daily basis because they keep changing their mind, between the government mandate and what they keep doing, and they’re seven months in.

Then the government mandate says that they’re going to have a review. “The results of this process will be fully shared with the public.

“Based on this independent review we will demand better terms for Newfoundland and Labrador.”

So it’s great, I look forward to the better terms and I really hope, now, that you can get a better deal. Because no deal would be a shame and we would lose out on the \$17 billion between last year and 2041, that we would have gotten from the deal, let alone Hydro-Québec building it, paying for it and we would own 60 per cent of it at zero financial risk and zero cost to taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador. If they can get a better deal, great, but to lose the fundamental principles of that deal would be a travesty to future generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I am worried about how much anyone can trust what the government is doing. They’re politically manipulating the price, in the government budget, for the price of oil.

They’re estimating \$6 US below the forecasted price of a barrel of oil. Then they said the day after the budget that they might send out cheques. This is May, June, July, August, September, the fall will be in four or five months. So now, potentially, they’re going to send out cheques.

This is their first budget. Everyone had very high expectations, and I know I’ve said everyone is underwhelmed and you’d think that they would’ve considered some of these things more thoughtfully in the budget. Obviously, we don’t know what’s going to happen with oil prices, but they’re politically manipulating those numbers now, and we don’t know what the implication of that is.

They must have had some reason or rationale for doing that, and then they’re saying they’re going to send out cheques in the fall. I think Newfoundlanders and Labradorians would appreciate cheques, but it’s difficult to wrap your head around, Speaker. I do think, you know, they have – I’m not going to read this part.

I also want to talk about that the minister has mentioned on numerous occasions that they’ve accomplished 80 per cent of their government mandate document. So we’re still doing some numbers on that and there are some different ways you can take that. For example, when they say they fulfilled their promise to 24-hour snow clearing, would that be one that they’ve done or no? It’s hard to tell. Some people would say yes; some people would say no. So there will be some subjectivity when we do that analysis in the next day or two.

Many taxes they didn’t implement yet. They haven’t implemented the Rotational Worker Tax Credit. They haven’t done the Physical Activity Tax Credit, and the businesses are doing 0.5 per cent per year, and that’s only on the profit that small businesses make. So if you’re a small business that just, kind of, breaks even, then you don’t really benefit from that small business tax credit. It’s only

for profit. It's only the tax that small businesses make on profit.

I also want to talk about – this came up in Question Period today. No, so let's go to the dry dock. We understand this morning that the government are spending \$2 million on a prefeasibility study into a dry dock. We know that there's up to a \$700-million estimate to construct a dry dock. If they can build a dry dock and have a booming industry in Newfoundland and Labrador, that is fantastic. I really hope that they're successful in doing that.

But I am worried about the prefeasibility study. They've announced this and Equinor have committed to doing this, to giving them \$200 million, but they don't know if it's feasible and they don't know if it's a good idea or not.

I hope they'll release that prefeasibility study. By the way that the government speaks about how they're going to release everything, I certainly expect that they will release the results of the prefeasibility study into the Legislature and to the public.

I've spoken with industry experts about this and if they can get a contract, a lucrative contract, let's say for the Coast Guard for so many submarines or so many ships, and they can build the dry dock to that spec, great, but without a contract, without a customer they don't know what they're building and who's going to run it. There are so many things up in the air and they're just starting now with a prefeasibility study. So Equinor has already committed to \$200 million, but what if the prefeasibility study comes back and says, okay, well, Halifax has this wrapped up, it's not worth your time and effort Newfoundland and Labrador to continue with that.

Firstly, I'd be surprised if they would release that information then, but maybe they still would, and what would happen with the \$200 million from Equinor? So let's say the prefeasibility study comes back and says

this is not a good use of taxpayers' money in Newfoundland and Labrador, or there is not an industry here for Newfoundland and Labrador, then what happens to the \$200 million from Equinor? Can they put it to something else?

But also where is the extra money going to come from the dry dock? By the time the prefeasibility study is done and they go and look for a customer and they have to figure out who is going to run it, they're already now kind of one-third done their mandate. I'm not sure any of this clues up before the next election, Speaker.

So it will be interesting to see how that progresses, how long the prefeasibility study is going to take, where the other \$500 million plus is going to come from to build the dry dock with no customers. We don't know how big they're building it. We don't know who's going to run it and, obviously, if there are no customers then there's no work because the work for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians only comes with the customers and the contracts and you build the right dry dock for the right spec, because if you build the wrong thing and you don't get any customers, then there's no work for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Then you have \$200 million plus – potentially \$500 million – of taxpayers' money with no work for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, if there are no customers.

I think that's really interesting to see and, again, that's not my opinion, that's the opinion of industry experts that I've consulted with about the dry dock.

We did hear, in terms of the budget, circling back, and obviously I do think the Bay du Nord is very relevant to the budget because that impacts the future revenues of the province. But if we look at the bond rating agencies and what they talked about, we do have information from DBRS Morningstar: Newfoundland and Labrador's budget deficit

persists, but elevated oil prices present upside.

So, in the summary, the high-level summary from DBRS Morningstar: Budget 2026-27 reiterates the PC Party's campaign priorities but presents a fiscal plan with ongoing deficits and rising debt. It also says our exposure to global commodity prices presents material fiscal upside.

I wonder what they would say about the Conservative government just choosing an amount for the price of oil to put in the budget, \$6 US below the average of the 11 forecasters, whose advice they have paid good money for, taxpayers, they have used your money to rightfully pay for expert opinion on what the average price of a barrel of oil is for the next year, and now they're not going with that. They've decided to go \$6 US a barrel below that. So I think that's very important for taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador to understand.

DBRS Morningstar talks about energy prices remain a material upside risk to the province's forecast – as they do. The Conservative government could still deliver a Conservative budget and have accurate numbers for the price of a barrel of oil. Those are not different things. It's just mind-blowing.

DBRS notes that they do have an oil price assumption of \$79 USD a barrel compared with the current price of around \$115 USD a barrel. Newfoundland and Labrador estimates that a \$1 USD barrel change in the Brent oil price will impact provincial revenues by \$33 million. So, again, you take \$33 million, as per DBRS Morningstar, times it by \$6 – I guess that's US, so the math doesn't perfectly, you have to do some exchange rates there, Speaker. But a significant amount of money that they've underestimated the revenues for the province on purpose in the budget of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm not sure what kind of fiscal planning that is.

The DBRD Morningstar says, again, with talking about the MOU: The PC party promised an independent review of the MOU with a final report expected soon, followed by a provincial referendum before any deal is signed. Again, which they've budgeted \$8 million for, for a referendum, which I completely disagree with putting this question to a referendum because I don't think it's appropriate to ask Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to commit to this when they have duly elected us to do so, and the Members opposite could not vote when the time came last year of whether or not they agreed or not. They did not vote and they walked out.

So it also says with Quebec's next provincial general election scheduled for October 2026, it remains highly uncertain if Newfoundland will realize the fiscal and economic benefits previously anticipated.

So this is not my opinion, the bond rating agency, DBRS Morningstar as per their public report says: It's highly uncertain if Newfoundland and Labrador will realize the fiscal and economic benefits previously anticipated.

So we need that MOU – and I know the government has said that they will further develop Churchill Falls. They will develop Gull Island, but when? I mean, we can do it in 3½ years time when we're back but then we will have lost the \$5 billion or \$6 billion by then we would have gotten already, plus who knows how less Quebec will need the energy then because other provinces have other options, the better the technology gets the more likely they can go nuclear, other options are available.

DBRS Morningstar says, it remains highly uncertain if Newfoundland will realize the fiscal and economic benefits previously anticipated, which, I think, is worth noting and obviously the bond rating agencies understand.

I also say, yes, we had a good GDP. It says: Newfoundland's economy continues to lead the country in growth following real GDP growth of 4.8 per cent in 2025, the province assumes real GDP growth will accelerate to 5.5 per cent in 2026, supported by increased oil and mineral production. Newfoundland's reliance on energy and mineral exports helps insulate it from volatile US trade policy, although volatility in global commodity prices and the timing of major projects present key risks to Newfoundland's growth outlook.

Absolutely, so depending on the price of oil, depending on how the budget looks, obviously we have this Bay du Nord deal now, which Equinor has not yet sanctioned, which we need them and want them to sanction and a Churchill Falls deal. The government knows what the report says but we don't know and we'll know May 19, the same day as we're allowed to talk to the members of the review panel about that.

I do hope that all works out for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, for my children, for my grandchildren, but there is a lot of play and a lot of risk in all the decisions that this government are making, I have to say.

I have 10 minutes left. I do want to thank everyone who has listened. I was surprised how many people reached out to me after having heard my entire time speaking last week. I was surprised. I don't know if it was it was budget, or maybe I just underestimated the number of people who watch the House of Assembly channel.

I do want to conclude by reiterating some of the core points that I've made and, for the Official Opposition, we want to make.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, has this 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 think that they are respecting the vote that they asked you for?

Are they acting in a way that you would expect them, and does this budget align with your expectations when you voted for them?

They implemented 24-hour snow clearing, and it was a challenging winter. I think no road can be 100 per cent clear at all times, but the government implemented 24-hour snow clearing and then they said it has been delivered. They successfully delivered on 24-hour snow clearing.

So I ask Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, are you happy with the government's implementation of 24-hour snow clearing? Reflect on that, for anyone watching, are you happy with their commitment and that they – they said promise made, promise kept. Are you happy with what they've delivered for you for 24-hour snow clearing? I was, I think, at an airport and everyone around me was talking about the joke that was 24-hour snow clearing. I did not comment or participate in that discussion at all, but I did listen as people were very frustrated about that.

I was walking into a local restaurant, going out and supporting a local restaurant, and the people coming before and after me – there was a group of them – and they were talking about how there are no topsides, the deal for Bay du Nord, that they were promised topsides and the deal does not have topsides, which has a direct implication for the budget of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I do note that they have continued affordability measures introduced by our government, which I was very proud of, such as the home heating supplement, the gas tax cut, the elimination of the sugar tax and the reduction in Motor Registration costs. They did increase the personal exemption, which will save the average Newfoundlander and Labradorian, the working Newfoundlander and Labradorian, up to \$28 a month, and they reduced the small business tax by 0.5 per cent, which

will save a business that makes \$100,000 in profit, \$500 a year. Yes, they did that.

I do want to note again that we introduced a similar cut in 2024, 0.5 per cent, and I am proud and I do fully support that we would have implemented an additional tax cut on home heating fuel. I do hope we see more affordability measures from the government. Maybe they'll send out cheques; maybe they'll do other things. I understand that that's linked to the price of oil, but I still can't get over the fact that they're underestimating the revenues for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador because they felt like it, because they thought that that was a fiscally prudent economic policy.

I do want to reiterate, for anyone watching, you can have a fiscally conservative budget and use accurate numbers that make up the budget. You do not have to come up with a number that is less than what the experts say because you want to be conservative.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, they're heckling me because –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: – they're defensive about what I'm saying. I'm using the minister's own words. I'm not making up anything. The minister said this to the board of trade. It wasn't in the Q and A. These were his remarks to the board of trade. I'm not making up anything. I'm not saying anything inflammatory. This is what the government has done with the budget.

From the minister's own words, they've decided that the 11 Brent crude forecasters, their decision was not the right decision to make, that they wanted to go \$6 US a barrel below that, and that is the revenue coming into the government's budget. I mean, I would be defensive, too, if I were a part of a

government that made a decision like that, Speaker.

So I ask, are you a rotational worker? Did you get the tax break that you were expecting? A lot of the taxes are staying the same. The sugar tax went from zero to zero. The gas tax went from 7.5 to 7.5 per cent. Again, I was ridiculed in here for bringing in an amendment to lower gas price tax, yet they're not meeting the public's expectation of what they committed to when they knocked on your door and asked for your vote.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: Okay, fine. They knocked on your door and said lower taxes and you're getting \$28 a month, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

AN HON. MEMBER: It may not be a lot for you, but it's a lot for some people.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: It is a lot for me and it is a lot for everyone, but I would say the expectation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians was more than \$28 a month tax savings, Speaker.

The government said they're going to do a review of all the fees and charges, but that's not done yet. So I do look forward to hearing more about all the fees and charges that they're going to reduce that will have a significant impact to the budget, I'm sure. Unless there aren't any fees and charges that they're going to reduce and we'll see what that looks like.

The words that they used to describe the taxes and fees were very sensational. They're trying to portray a picture that we have sensational fees and taxes. So let's see, show us what these sensational taxes and fees are that you're going to remove –

great, fine. I look forward to learning about that. They haven't brought any forward yet, so we'll see what comes of that.

I also want to talk about the \$45 million now, in my last few minutes, that was in a savings account that that's already been on the ratepayers' electricity bill. There was extra money put aside from ratepayers, from paying their bills, in an account and the government are using that to lower pressure onto people's bills. Right, that is the right thing to do.

What is the wrong thing to do is to present it as a budget – something that you've delivered, a gift that you've given people. The government has not given people a gift to lower your power bills. They are using money that ratepayers have already paid. I used the example last week and I'll use it again; it's like a coffee pool.

So I work in an office and we all pay so much a month for our coffee and water. That was in my first job. In my first job, we did that. We paid in every month because our employer did not provide water or coffee. We had a little social agreement and then, at the end of the year, if there was money left, we would not pay for a month or something and that would buy our coffee for a month.

But our employer didn't come in and say, oh, we're giving you a free month of coffee, because they didn't. The employer is not giving us a free month of coffee. We already paid for our coffee. In this exact instance, ratepayers have already paid this. This is not the government. They've already paid this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: I think the government should not be leading people to think that this is a gift. It's not even their dollars. This is money outside the general revenues of government that ratepayers have already paid and it's being given back to them, yes.

But unrelated – this almost has very little to do with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, I really hope that the government can deliver more in Churchill Falls for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I do hope that when they get all these MRI machines, the MRI machines have to be ordered, they have to arrive and they're going to need tens of staff to operate these MRI machines. Okay, I did this math last week. So let's say they're going to have two new MRI machines, they need maybe 12 to 13 MRI technologists to operate two MRI machines, and that diploma program is three years to do that.

It's great that they're going to bring in more MRI machines, but who is going to operate the machines? It's a three-year program to operate MRI machines. I think the government won't be able to see the results of their promises for MRI machines in particular. Like, this is a four- or five-year implementation.

I wonder if people in those communities understand that they're not going to be able to walk in and get an MRI in Grand Falls-Windsor in 2026 or 2027, because it takes a year for the machine to arrive and to get installed and the staff have to be trained. Maybe they'll take the staff from St. John's and move them to Grand Falls-Windsor, and that's their prerogative.

But there's not MRI technicians just waiting around. I'm sure in every province and in every country, they're being utilized. If they can hire from another country, that's great. But I do think that is a key consideration that they're not doing a good job of managing people's expectations and that's bad for them and good for us.

Speaker, I also want to note that we have not yet seen a pharmacare program. How many times did the government commit to signing a national pharmacare program?

They didn't do that yet. I haven't seen that yet.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Yeah, we didn't do it, but you gave us a really hard time.

SPEAKER: I ask the Member to address the Chair, and I ask for order.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

To conclude, I would say, just reflect on, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, did you get what you paid for with this government's first budget? I think the answer is no.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, it's always a pleasure to get up and speak in this House, especially on a topic that's important to all of us, our budget and our fiscal path forward.

I'd like just to highlight the words that were spoken from the MHA for Mount Scio over the last while. It reminded me of being at sea, onboard of a ship, because she kept cycling through the same stuff. It was like going around in a circle.

Our government is taking a different path, clearly. We are focused on driving that ship forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: We are doing it with a sense of urgency, as was highlighted with the signing of the Bay du Nord agreement.

The MHA for Mount Scio highlighted that, when she and her colleagues went door to

door, they fully hoisted in what people wanted, and that our government is not delivering. If that's really the case, then why are we on this side?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Not only did we hoist in what people want, better health care, lower taxes, safer communities, we are delivering. We are delivering for every bay and cove in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: The MHA for Mount Scio highlighted, with regard to the mandate letters, that there was only one mandate letter and that we didn't get individual mandate letters. You know, I reflected on that, and I go: That's correct.

The issue is that this is a team. This is a government. This is a Cabinet. This is a caucus. It's all driving the ship in the same direction. We are a team.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: That mandate letter was put out rather quickly, it was quite encompassing, and it provided clear leadership on where we are going and where our Premier expects us to go.

So let me highlight a few words from that mandate letter: It is a privilege to serve in government, and we all share a duty to use our time in office to make our province stronger and more prosperous. That is what we are focused on doing. Ground our decisions in the commitments and principles detailed in our 2025 election platform for all of us.

Now the first budget from our Finance Minister, 80 per cent of the commitments in that blue book have been fulfilled in the first six months.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: What did our Premier say? Yes, there are additional commitments to be fulfilled from that blue book, but we will deliver on each and every one of them –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: – because that is being open and accountable with every resident of Newfoundland and Labrador. As is in the mandate letter, we will remain laser focused on what matters most, better health care, lower taxes and safer communities, and execute a vigorous economic development agenda.

Now I want to highlight, in response to some of the things that were highlighted, by some of the words that are in our mandate letter. Our mandate letter will give clear direction that we were elected to be honest, open and accountable.

I'll go back to about a year ago when we were debating the last budget from the previous government, and the issue of the tobacco settlement was raised. I asked the Opposition was that being open, honest and accountable? That tobacco settlement, as we lobbied for at that time a year ago, stayed in their budget accounting figures. Then, when they changed leadership late spring, they doubled down and kept it. Even into the financial forecast in August, they kept it; going into the election, they kept it.

It was only when we changed government and brought in a new Finance Minister were the proper generally accepted accounting principles put into place and that accounting transaction was reversed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: In fact, our actions reflected on how the Auditor General – yes – how the Auditor General viewed the tobacco settlement. Was there any apology from the previous government, absolutely not. Nothing.

If that had stayed and they'd been using the bond rating agency words lately, it would have put our province at significant risk because, to quote from what the MHA for Mount Scio was saying earlier about being manipulative, how they were using the tobacco settlement previously was being manipulative; pressuring others sometimes in sneaky ways to get what you want. It was, in fact, under reporting the deficit from last year.

Clearly, when we were elected, our province deserved and got better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: To continue on in the direction that we received in our mandate letter, this is from the Premier, "I expect that each of you maintain the highest level of ethics and integrity ... I expect each of us to exercise fiscal responsibility along with a steadfast focus on results."

The MHA for Mount Scio keeps talking about the replacement for the hospital, St. Clare's. This government exercised fiscal responsibility –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: – and cancelled a program that was not even put into the fiscal forecast. Can you imagine spending more than our annual budget itself, as the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has highlighted? We have been prudent. We are doing what is right for Newfoundland and Labrador.

The MHA for Mount Scio also highlighted with regard to pharmacare, and if the previous government had moved, maybe we would have had a deal right now. But I do know, and as the Minister of Health currently has continued to highlight in this House, she is pushing to get a deal.

The MHA for Mount Scio also highlighted about 24-hour snow clearing. There were no

cuts on our side. It was a restoration of service of over \$3 million.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shameful.

L. PADDOCK: There's nothing shameful about that. That's about the safety of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on our highways. It's not the same if you're investing \$3 million more.

The other one I want to highlight, and what the MHA for Mount Scio has highlighted, is Horizons at 106, a sole-sourced contract. How is that being open and accountable with taxpayers' money? You know, the lease that they signed, they could have bought that hotel. Now we're coming on towards the end of it, there needs to be a transition plan. The Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being will put one in place and he will ensure with his team that every individual is looked after.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: I do expect the previous administration to at least apologize to the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador. Once again, they let them down with the use of their taxpayer money.

The MHA for Mount Scio repeatedly highlighted about the oil forecast here this afternoon: \$79. That's correct. But it and this government, this Finance Minister, is being conservative. Why? Just turn on your TV and look what is happening in the Strait of Hormuz, where 20 per cent of the world's oil flows through. We are in a very volatile, fluid, geopolitical situation. We must be conservative in how we budget this year.

Let's take that compared to last year. Last year, when the budget came in, there was an abrupt change, partly due to what happened south of the border, the tariff situation, and the financial forecast with regard to the oil forecast proved to be overestimated. We lobbied from then right through to the fall for the government to

adjust. There was no adjustment on that forecast until the current Finance Minister took the reins.

That comes back to what we were saying and what's been highlighted with bond agencies. The MHA for Mount Scio was right in responding that the bond agencies said we are meeting our blue book commitments and bond agencies, having studied in the financial world, give great credence to governments that are prudent and conservative in their estimates.

I want to highlight here now, just quickly, because our government has been and will continue to have a focus on three major things: better health care, lower taxes, making life more affordable and safer communities. On the better health care front, as the MHA for Mount Scio highlighted about the MRI machine in Grand Falls-Windsor, as an MHA representing a district in Central Newfoundland, Baie Verte - Green Bay, that MRI machine is going to provide an incredible level of front-line service access to so many residents in my district. Not just my district, right across Central Newfoundland and Labrador. That is better health care.

There's also, in our budget, additional recruitment of doctors, additional funding for the prescription drug plan and then another one that really has an impact across rural Newfoundland and that is the hourly wage rate increase for home support workers. I personally heard that at so many doors. This is about setting the conditions for so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, our seniors that helped build our province, to allow them to stay in their own homes, in their own communities.

There's a range of measures there, because we've been listening. We've been listening to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with regard to their health care challenges over the last number of years. This budget is the start of a plan to right the ship and move the ship forward.

On the second piece there in making life more affordable, there simply is no new taxes. In actual fact, the tax situation for a number of people has notably increased with the basic personal amount, the volunteer firefighter and search and rescue tax credit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Seniors' Benefit increasing by 20 per cent; expanding eligibility for the Newfoundland Child Benefit; and reducing the sugar tax to make sure that it is completely off the books. That sugar tax is just not an impact on Newfoundland and Labrador residents; it was a negative impact on a number of small businesses and, in speaking to a number of people in the Finance Department, it was also a challenge on the Finance Department, too, in asking a lot of repeated questions on what it applied to.

The other one I want to highlight because it had a huge impact across the doors in my district, and that is the increase, after a decade or more of no increase, of funding support to foster families.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Their cost of living in raising and providing support to a child has notably increased, and our government is doing the right thing to ensure that they are being looked after.

AN HON. MEMBER: How could you not vote for that?

L. PADDOCK: As my colleague said, how simply can you not vote for something that's giving back to families in such a way?

So, like I said, making life more affordable, no new taxes. It reminds me of what I said last year in quoting Churchill: A government cannot tax themselves into prosperity. It's like standing in a bucket and trying to raise yourself up by the handle.

Our government is looking with what we are offering those in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, allowing folks to be balanced with probably a few more buckets, not looking to tax the buckets that the Opposition, when they were government, would have done.

Safer communities: There are a number of initiatives, and I think one that I'm going to highlight, because I travel across our province a great deal going out to my district, and that's an additional \$14 million for brush cutting, road signage – that road signage is also going to help with tourism – culvert replacement, road patching and an expansion of moose fencing.

We are listening to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Additional investments in road safety is an additional investment in them and their daily commutes, an additional investment in our tourism industry and an additional investment in those that are looking to set up shop and do business in Newfoundland and Labrador.

From my own departmental side, I want to highlight two things with this budget that I believe is really a beacon of hope for our future and that's the reduction in the small business tax rate. We have to set the conditions for a business to set up, grow, we need more entrepreneurs. Then paid work terms for students. This is the start of it with the nurses. Then the graduate program with regards to tuition rebate. We are setting the conditions for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to be educated here but to stay here, to raise their families here and to grow here.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a real pleasure to talk to the budget. It's my first time speaking to the budget in the House. I'm looking forward to this process. I know Estimates have just started. Tomorrow morning, I think we're going to join the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to go through their Estimates there. So, yeah, it is a really interesting process. So I appreciate the time to speak about this.

I cannot wax eloquently like my colleague from Mount Scio and fill 3½ hours of hard-hitting facts.

AN HON. MEMBER: Facts matter.

J. PARSONS: The facts matter, that's right. But do you know what? Governing is hard. I see the Finance Minister is listening, I'm sure.

Governing is hard, and I'm sure that every Member on the other side of the House is starting to realize that now. There's been a great deal of rhetoric throughout the campaign and throughout this session about – and I think the Member previous mentioned things, you know, the slogans, better health care, lower taxes and safer communities.

But a lot of people seem disappointed or underwhelmed with the measures that have been proposed and put out in the Budget Speech and the other documents with budget. There is no water to wine. There is no hidden Liberal slush fund here at the Confederation Building that can balance the budget magically. There are just hard-working bureaucrats doing the best they can with the resources they have.

We've had a few pronouncements that government is going to fix all of the problems that we have. I'm sure that the last six months have really opened their eyes to the complexity of governance in a complicated modern world.

I've heard a lot of rhetoric around what happened in the past, around things like, the previous Member mentioned the tobacco settlement as a big smoking gun for some kind of improper accounting or whatever, but the money is there. The money is there.

As a new Member of the House, who is not a Member of the previous government, when I hear the rhetoric about the old government was so terrible, I don't really care. That's not something that affects me. I'm looking forward to the future, and we all should be looking forward to the future, unless there is, instead of a floating dock, a time machine in the budget as well.

I understand we are looking at deficits for the foreseeable future. Now, I'm pretty sure that I heard, when we were talking about the Future Fund, that there was some hope that during this term we would return to surplus and we would be able to contribute, once again, to the Future Fund. That's within the last couple of weeks and now, obviously, we have a budget that says something a little different. It doesn't look like we're going to be able to contribute to our retirement fund any time soon.

I noticed in the Estimates that the Future Fund is taken out, the contribution. Now, obviously, that's a little presumptuous because we are still debating the Future Fund and I know, given the new literature that the Finance Minister is reading and hopefully through our eloquent debate, when we're finishing with Committee on the Future Fund, we'll convince him that he's taken the wrong direction on the Future Fund and he might need to change his mind and put that \$184 million back into saving for the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. PARSONS: It is a fund, yes.

In that regard, I still have to say, I think we have to walk and chew bubble gum at the same time here. We do have to deal with, regularly, requests from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to disclose our assets and our liabilities and things like that.

Now, I don't want to get too personal, but my wife and I have a mortgage. We have a car payment. We have a line of credit, but we also have investments and we have pensions, putting a little money away for our kids for education. We've got to walk and chew bubble gum and this government has to do the same thing.

We'll get back to the Future Fund but this is a very important part of this budget, I think, and it's a big indicator of our philosophy going forward and this government's philosophy.

When I was young, I worked in tech. I was able to contribute faithfully to an RRSP, early on in my career, it was really good. Then I did something a little bit stupid maybe and I went into public service as the mayor in Corner Brook where I didn't get paid nearly as much and I couldn't contribute as much because I didn't have as much money, but because of the compounding effect and the ability to have time on my side, it has done me well to put that money away early.

We're going to talk about the Future Fund in more detail later on, but I just did a few numbers, just trying to calculate how much, how big the Fund would grow. So without contribution – and I took a fairly modest, I think, it was a 5 per cent return on our investment, given that, five years that becomes \$680 million currently. In 10 years, it becomes \$868 million; 25, \$1.8 billion. It's getting substantial, \$1.8 billion. Then in 50 years, you're up to \$6.1 billion. That sounds like a lot of money. If you put away just 2 per cent, not a sliding scale, just 2 per cent of our oil royalties into that, it could be closer to – and estimating about \$31 million, so it's actually a little higher than that this

year because the price of oil is up. You'd be at \$12 billion in 50 years – over \$12 billion, double what you would be if you didn't contribute. If you contributed even \$100 million, that would be \$27 billion in 50 years. So it's a substantial amount of money.

Again, I know we'll talk about that and I know it's diverting \$186 million from the fund, using it in operations this year. It is not something that I agree with but, again, I think it's something that we need to reconsider and think about some more.

That's the thing with this budget; I don't see any long-term solutions. When I say long term, I don't mean this term; I mean decades. We are still betting on oil. We've been betting on oil for a long time. We're still betting on oil.

A couple of things I will mention in the budget here. I'd like to talk about housing, and this was a very passionate debate here in the House recently – the Auditor General's report about Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and some of the downfall, I guess, of the last few years with regard to housing and we all pledged, I think, in both a private Member's bill and a motion from government, that we would support government in doing more for housing.

I think that's a no-brainer. I think everyone wants to do more but, like I said, governing is hard – governing is hard. The minister promised 10,000 units over five years. That's a lot of housing – was it four years or five years?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. PARSONS: Well, it was five years, though. We'll give them the five years.

AN HON. MEMBER: They have to fix them.

J. PARSONS: Yeah, fix them, but that is a whole other thing. But I noticed – and this is why Estimates are so important; I'm sure we're going to get some clarity. In the

speech, it was mentioned that there are \$31 million over three years for the construction of new social housing, so that's \$10 million a year. That's 20 units. It's about half a million bucks a unit right now is what the contracting amount is going for. It's going half a million bucks a unit.

Again, I was very grateful to see the government follow thorough on the previous government's commitment to housing in my district. In the Crestview area, there was a tender awarded for \$9.8 million for a 20-unit apartment building. So \$10 million a year is going to be difficult. At that rate it's going to be very difficult, and I noticed the NLHC's budget is reduced by \$0.5 million as well.

I know this might be some rightsizing. I know the minister has used this word before in terms of actuals versus what was budgeted to try and get things done, but the rhetoric is difficult to match with the numbers in the budget. Again, I have a lot of empathy for all of you ministers in terms of the work you do. It is hard to figure out how to get it done, but this is not going to do it.

Likewise, I guess, we heard about child care. Early childhood education, there has a lot of significant debate here in the House this session. The introduction, of course, of the \$10-a-day daycare was a big improvement. I think there was around 11,000 spaces created, but it's not just about affordability, of course. It's also about availability and the work needs to continue. I think we've all heard and we all agree in the House that we'd like to see more child care spaces.

Lack of child care has a particularly difficult effect on parents, of course, families, but particularly on women – women who are trying to enter the workforce are disproportionately affected by this. It leaves people to have fewer children and to have them later in life, which affects our demographics and affects our province's budgets for decades to come.

I think we've all stated that we are in favour of trying to fix this and improve our inventory of child care and we somewhat disagree on how to do that. I think there were promises made in the blue book to look at pensions and sick leave for ECEs. It was great to see a pay grid put in place, but there was an expectation to increase that in the future to be able to recruit and retain more ECEs that are needed for these child care spaces.

In this budget there are 400 new spaces committed – just 400. Now, again, I understand there are limitations and cost limitations, but 400 is difficult to make an impact on the scale I think that we all want in this House.

Health care – so the budget, of course, is not just a set of numbers. It is a state of the union kind of thing. It's a statement of where government wants to go and how it wants to conduct its business. So we all know that health care is very difficult, and I'm sure that government is realizing, I'm sure the minister is realizing how difficult it is to effect change in health care. It takes incremental, long, sustained change, and that's why I was a big fan of an arm's-length Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services because it does take more than a term of government to make a lot of these changes. But I don't see any longer plan here.

I do see and I am very grateful, I did notice there was an allotment of 45 new long-term care beds in Corner Brook. I have heard from health professionals that it is going to be virtually impossible to staff that. Again, I hope that they're wrong. I support government trying to do that. But we need to look at big, sweeping ideas here and I'm not seeing that.

Related to that is MTAP. Now, outside the Avalon, MTAP is very important. It's an equity issue for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to get the care that they need and deserve. I know that it said there is going to be 100 per cent coverage for –

quote, unquote – eligible transportation costs. So, again, we'll learn in Estimates, I'm sure, over the next few weeks, what that actually means.

So there are certain limits set for the amount, percentage paid on room nights, mileage, things like that. Does this 100 per cent mean everything is paid, or does it mean that everything eligible is paid? It's like the 24-hour snow clearing that was mentioned earlier. The devil is in the details here. Again, if the minister wants to do 24-hour snow clearing, it is one thing to change it from call-in to on site, but it's a whole other thing to be able to staff it. It's not that easy. So there are things, I guess, that have to follow through on this to make that commitment real.

So when it comes to economic growth, this budget has, I guess, a few things that I saw that were missing. There was hardly any mention – I don't know if there was any mention – of immigration in this budget. I don't know if anyone saw immigration in the budget; I didn't notice it. Now, that is going to be very important. We talk about, constantly, labour shortages in tourism, in many other industries, but immigration is going to be an important part of that.

Instead, we're relying on oil again, and oil is very important to us. It has been for years. We've been in the oil game continually for decades.

So I hear a lot about a floating dock, and this is a very interesting idea. I'm not sure about the wisdom of government going it alone on this. I understand that there is interest in getting partners, but why not, instead, support private industry with investment where we see it as strategic? There are opportunities, I think, to do that in other forms of energy. I know in the wind sector – I personally didn't agree with the hydrogen move. I think that's why government was cautious in the hydrogen sector, because it was an emerging technology. So not investing directly, but

instead saying: Okay, if you have a proposal, you can lease land. You can do something here, but leave the risk to the private sector.

Affordability – so we mentioned, and I know that the Finance Minister has mentioned, the \$200-million savings many times. I'm listening, but I will remind him that they are continuation of a lot of existing things, like the home heating supplement and the gas tax cut, which I think is disingenuous to say it was not going to be in the budget. I think everyone in this room knows that was going to continue on. The elimination of the sugar tax, that's an elimination of nothing. A reduction in motor vehicle registration costs, which are, again, a continuation of how things are done.

We had proposed, I know, as part of the campaign, cutting the PST. I know our colleagues in the NDP proposed, I think, HST cutting, but that was a real savings that affects everyone and could make a real difference.

I know that there was the announcement of the \$45 million from our savings account to supplement and to prevent a rate increase coming this summer, but I think, as my colleague from Mount Scio mentioned, this was already put in the coffee can. It was money already put away by ratepayers. It's not really a new savings. We've heard many times, and we've heard different numbers – and I'm glad that the minister gave us some real numbers there, I forget what the exact yearly number was – but it does average less than \$30 a month in terms of that. It's \$28.

Just to let you know, that's very similar to the latest pay increase for Netflix, if you want to know. That's how much that is. So we can talk about how significant that is in people's lives, but that's what it is equivalent to.

There was something that I read going through the blue book – because I like to

read too, just like the Minister of Finance likes to read. We're going to have some book club; I can't wait. You're going to hear lots more about the retirement savings ideas I have for our Future Fund.

But there was mention of, the Liberals added or increased 300 taxes and fees, and the new government was going to get rid of those things. I think maybe my colleague from Mount Scio mentioned this as well, I'd like to know what those are.

In closing, I guess, I just want to quickly say that I'm really glad that I've heard in Question Period the last few times that –

B. DAVIS: (Inaudible.)

J. PARSONS: I got 30 seconds, Bernie.

AN HON. MEMBER: No names.

J. PARSONS: Sorry.

I think the Premier said that the previous government expired in October. I know that in previous – I don't know, yesterday is as equivalent as tomorrow, you can go back to last week – but I think I heard the House Leader mention something about we lost and you won. I'm glad you won –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'll remind the Member that his time is expired.

J. PARSONS: Thank you all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Chair.

It's always a pleasure to rise in the House and represent the good folks of Conception

Bay East - Bell Island. At great risk of bursting into flames or being struck by lightning, I'm going to read something from the blue book.

Of course, I'm joking.

It says – the Premier's name is there but I'm not allowed to name him, his last name is there – the PC government “will always stand up for the oil and gas sector which has brought much prosperity to the province.” I would agree. I would agree that the oil and gas sector has brought much prosperity to Newfoundland and Labrador. I was fortunate enough to work in media between the late '80s and 2013, and I watched much of the start of it, including the first oil. There was this big production down outside what was the Delta Hotel at the time, next door to Cabot Tower there. There was this big production done about the first oil from Hibernia back in 1997. I'm going to talk a little bit about those numbers in just a couple of minutes.

I should mention, as well, that it was nice today, I've had a little glimpse of the Bay du Nord agreement, which was out. We had said all along that we were in favour, obviously, of Bay du Nord going forward, and continuing to build on what is already a great industry providing many, many, many billions of dollars in royalties and revenues to Newfoundland and Labrador, countless jobs over the last 40 years, and this will enhance that. It is a new horizon, if you will, going into deep water for the first time, and there are some great benefits associated with the ability to continue with our oil and gas sector and build on what is already a wonderful and very lucrative industry.

I am still concerned, though, about the investment for the dry dock, and the association of that in lieu of the topside work. That will be something for another day, the \$200 million that was in lieu of that work that would be guaranteed for here, with the hopes that all these pieces will fall into place within the next year, and then

Equinor and BP will go forward and give the final investment decision to actually say, yes, we're going to proceed with this and create jobs here and create royalties and wealth. There's a lot of money at stake.

I was going to write something or just speak a little bit, but I'm going to read directly from the *Budget 2026, The Economy* book, which is about oil and gas, to prove my point that we're not backing any industry at all; we're continuing to build on something that's already there.

"The oil and gas industry plays a key role in the Newfoundland and Labrador economy. It accounted for approximately 14.7 per cent of the province's real GDP in 2024. There are four developed oilfields in the province's offshore area: Hibernia, Terra Nova, White Rose (including the North Amethyst and West White Rose fields), and Hebron. All four oilfields produced crude oil in 2025, as production resumed at the White Rose field in March 2025 after being halted since January 2024 for the SeaRose FPSO to undergo a refit. Oil production in Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore totalled 87.6 million barrels (MMbbls) in 2025, representing an increase of 14.6 per cent, or 11.1 MMbbls, compared with 2024.

"Although Newfoundland and Labrador's production increased in 2025, the value of crude oil production remained on par with 2024 levels, as lower oil prices offset the gains associated with increased production."

I'll skip some of this section, here now, to jump to the good stuff – the really good stuff.

Basically, this is the government book, which was put out, *The Economy*, and it starts with Hibernia, as it was the first sanctioned oil field since 1997, November of 1997.

I happened to go to Bull Arm back in the mid-'90s to get an opportunity to see that

structure, that incredible structure being built. I remember, at the time, the fear when they towed it out. I can remember seeing some national headlines saying, Ludes of London could go bankrupt if this thing tipped over. It didn't. At one point there was 12 or 15 feet of clearance. Good old Archimedes with the theory of displacement and the ability to float concrete and steel still baffles the mind sometimes but there you have it.

Hibernia located in the Jeanne d'Arc region approximately 315 kilometres southeast of St. John's was the first offshore oil project to be developed in Newfoundland and Labrador. Hibernia was developed using a standalone Gravity Base Structure and produced first oil in November of 1997. I can remember some of the arguments about wanting to make this safer, of course, following the disaster involving the Ocean Ranger. When you're putting something out in the sea and there are all these storms and icebergs and everything else, we wanted to make it as safe as possible, and it was one of the arguments for the Gravity Base Structure: build this great big thing, plop (inaudible) and it stays there.

Oil production at Hibernia totalled 25.8 billion barrels of oil in 2025, on par with 2024. The Hibernia oil field has an estimated 495 million barrels of recoverable reserves remaining as of March 3, 2026.

I can remember the early stories about Hibernia and the fact that we're going to get 500 million barrels of oil out of this or 400 million. Now, I can remember the story from not long ago, a billion barrels of oil and we're going to continue on.

So we look at things like Bay du Nord and West White Rose and the others that are still pumping oil out there, even beyond what the early estimates are as of March 3, 2026.

There were 991 Newfoundland and Labrador residents working on the project as of December 31, 2025. Those are the

jobs, I'll say it again, the Finance Minister likes to repeat good numbers, 991 Newfoundland and Labrador residents working on the project as of December 31, 2025.

Let's move on to Terra Nova. The Terra Nova oil field located southeast of the Hibernia field also in the Jeanne d'Arc region was the second oil project to be developed in the province. The field was developed using the Terra Nova FPSO and achieved first oil in January of 2002. Production at Terra Nova was halted in December of 2019 to allow for a refit of the Terra Nova FPSO and resumed in November of 2023. Oil production at Terra Nova totalled 8 million barrels in 2025, down 7.5 per cent from 2024.

The Terra Nova oil field has an estimated 63 million barrels of recoverable reserves remaining, that's as of March 4, 2026, just a couple of months ago. Last year, there were 535 Newfoundland and Labrador residents working on the Terra Nova project. That was as of December 2025.

White Rose: The White Rose project also located in the Jeanne d'Arc region was the third oil project to be developed in Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore. The oil field was developed using the SeaRose FPSO and first achieved oil in November of 2025. There was no production at White Rose in 2024 as the FPSO was offline to undergo a refit. Production resumed March 13, 2025. Oil production rose to 3.5 million barrels in 2025.

In May 2025, not long ago, about a year ago, the concrete gravity structure for the West White Rose project was towed from Argentina to the oil field in the Jeanne d'Arc Basin and the structure was installed in the seabed in June. Of course, commissioning of the drilling platform continues. First oil is expected in the second half of 2026, which we, of course, are much looking forward to and I'm sure the Finance Minister is as well.

The West White Rose project is expected to reach peak production, a rate of 80,000 barrels a day, by the end of 2029 and extended the life of the White Rose project by about 14 years. There were 824 Newfoundland and Labrador residents working on White Rose's operational activities and 452 residents working on the West White Rose project as of December 31, 2025.

By the way, I had a chance to visit Argentina and the West White Rose facility as well, and was also on the White Rose FPSO as well, and Terra Nova.

Hebron: I was there the day they towed that out as well. Fortunately, in my former media job, I got to cover these big stories which have all been beneficial to Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Hebron oil field located in the Jeanne d'Arc region became the province's fourth stand-alone offshore oil project when it achieved first oil in 2017. Oil production at Hebron totalled 50.3 million barrels in 2025, up 19.7 per cent from 2024. There were 904 Newfoundland and Labrador residents working on the project as of December 31, 2025.

Bay du Nord: Of course, this remains to be seen, and we do indeed hope that the final investment decision is made and that it is favourable for Newfoundland and Labrador and that we actually get to continue developing our offshore industry.

The C-NLOER, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Energy Regulator, in a report that the Minister of Energy and Mines had talked about a couple of weeks ago and I had referenced as well, in the '24-'25 year, they had forecast \$1.6 billion in royalties to Newfoundland and Labrador from all our offshore – \$1.6 billion. I think the minister's budget documents indicate that in this coming year the forecast will be \$2 billion in royalties related to the offshore.

We can talk about the Future Fund perhaps another time and how, if we took even 1 per cent of that and put it in the Future Fund. This was our thought process. Again, we've agreed to disagree on the philosophical nature of whether you put it all on debt, borrow a little bit at a lower rate and make more money in the Future Fund, that's not part of this because I think, at this point in time, that won't happen.

I still have about nine minutes left so I want to break one of my rules, which is in media, you give a lot of numbers and you're going to confuse people, but I've already done that. So I'm going to continue to do it.

I want to go back to November 1997 and December 1997 and this is the total oil production in barrels of oil coming from the offshore stations that I just spoke about, which were highlighted and written very nicely about in *The Economy* book from *Budget 2026*.

In 1997, as I mentioned, first oil from Hibernia didn't come until late in the year, November and December. Those were the only two years where there was marked actual production. It was 1.27 million, I'll round up 1.3 million, that was in 1997. In 1998, of course, still with just Hibernia on, that jumped to 23.8 million barrels of oil that year.

The next year in '99 it was 36.3 million. In 2000, it was 52.8 million. In 2001, it was 54.2 million barrels of oil produced in Newfoundland and Labrador in one year. That almost doubled to 104,333,625 million in 2002; 122,963 million barrels in 2003; 114 million oil in 2004; 111 million barrels of oil in 2005; 110 million barrels of oil in 2006; 134.4 million barrels of oil in 2007. That was the high point.

It dropped a bit in 2008 to 125 million barrels of oil; 97 million barrels of oil in 2009; over 100 million barrels, just over, in 2010; 97 million barrels of oil in 2011; 72 million barrels of oil in 2012; 83.5 million

barrels of oil produced in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2013; 78.8 million barrels of oil in 2014; 62.6 million barrels of oil in 2015; in 2016, 76.7 million barrels of oil; in 2017, 80.5 million barrels of oil – we're getting there, almost there – 84 million barrels of oil in 2018; 95.5 million barrels of oil in 2019; 104 million barrels of oil in 2020; 94 million barrels of oil in 2021; 84 million barrels of oil produced in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2022; 73 million barrels of oil in 2023, as mentioned, some of the installations were offline for refit.

Now that jumped back up to 76.4 million in 2024, and last year we recorded 87.5 million barrels of oil produced in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's about 240,000 barrels of oil a day, if you divide it by 365. It's a lot – it's a lot of oil.

So, again, and I've said this before, the point that I've tried to make is that we're not back in the oil business, although I do understand where this is coming from. Over the last few years, Speaker, there has been global forces at play. There have been political forces at play beyond these shores that were not as favourable.

Those things have changed federally now, thankfully, and they've also changed globally. I mean, we see what's happening with the price of oil now, the uncertainty. As you see the fluctuation in those numbers that I recited from 1997 on, there's always a level of risk and uncertainty as to where the price of oil will be and how much revenue this government can actually – any government, regardless of the political stripe, can count on at the end of the day.

So we have this industry that provides so much and has provided so much for decades, and I think the minister pointed out – if it wasn't in Estimates, it was earlier today, it was in Question Period or some point – about how it took a long time from the discovery of that oil to getting it. Because it's not like Alberta where you're

on land. You're in one of the harshest environments in the world.

I think if you've talked to any of the producers who are involved – ExxonMobil, Chevron, any of them, Cenovus, Equinor, BP, they will agree that this is one of the harshest environments, off the North Atlantic, off our shores. It's very risky. People get paid a lot of money to work out there, but there's a big cost. They're away from their families and it's dangerous.

We've seen the perils of what can happen and we hope that nothing ever happens again where we lose a single life related to our offshore oil and gas industry. Unfortunately, we have in the past and it has taken a long time to develop these things. Technology has changed a lot since 1997. When you think about the reference that was made to Guyana, I think that people who work in the industry will say that, yeah, they moved pretty fast from 2015 until now, because their regulations in that country are quite different in terms of safety and in terms of looking after the people who work in that industry and making sure that they're safe.

That industry was able to move along a lot quicker because of where it is. Their risks there are more political unrest versus something that you would have here, which would be Mother Nature – the strongest force that you could, potentially ever have to deal with.

With respect to the oil and gas industry, there was volatility during COVID when the premier took over in 2020. At that point in time, as we hit COVID, the price of oil tanked. Basically, nobody was going anywhere. There was no demand for it. Therefore the price dropped.

Right now, there's not a lot of oil moving, so the price goes up. If you'd look at what's happening because of the war and what's happening in the Strait of Hormuz, obviously, this drives the price up. This is

where the provincial government, the Finance Minister or others, can grab onto those levers and, maybe, make things a little more affordable for people in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is our opinion, respectfully, that you did not do as much as you could have for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It was not our decision to make, but there's an argument to be made that if there is this windfall of unexpected oil and gas royalties – and I talked about the billions and billions of dollars and the millions and millions of barrels of oil that have been produced off our shores and how that can, actually, impact the average person. I get that every dollar that comes in, there are enough people standing around hoping to get funding that you'd need \$10 more dollars on top of it.

You have to make decisions based on what the greatest need is that will, ultimately, help the greatest amount of people. Again, which is where our argument would come in, that there could have been more done, especially given the windfall of the last few months with respect to what's happening globally, the geopolitical scene and how much that's impacted the bottom line here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Yes, there's debt. Yes, there's a deficit. But most people don't walk up and down the street all day worrying about that or thinking about that; they're thinking about how they can get through the end of the week and get their groceries and get their kids whatever they need to do or get themselves to work.

I chatted with somebody on the weekend, when I was on Bell Island, who was concerned about the price of gas and is taking measures to park the car versus having it go across and – people are doing that because they have to.

Mr. Speaker, all that is to say, as my time winds down, I think I've given a pretty good argument that we're not back in the oil

business; we're continuing in the oil business.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that debate now be adjourned.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that debate do now be adjourned.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Committee of the Whole, Order 2.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole and consider Bill 4.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that this House do resolve itself into Committee of Whole to consider Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act.

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.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dwyer): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act." (Bill 4)

CLERK (Hawley George): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Chair.

We already spoke to this in second reading, so I just want to put it on the record again in Committee of the Whole that this past summer, our Liberal government, we did remove the sugar tax. This was taken off in July 2025. So I have some questions for the minister.

Firstly, Minister, as we're talking about this again and it's been maybe a week or two – I can't remember when we talked about this – I'm wondering if you can, for anyone who is just now tuning in today, refresh us on what you are achieving with this bill.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: I thank the Member for the question.

We certainly achieved in Opposition, I think, that led to the termination of the tax. I think the fact that no other province in Canada followed the tax was probably another contributing factor. We know that this tax increased the grocery prices for those who can least afford it in the province. After making representation on, then, the Opposition side, for 120-plus documented statements in the House, it was terminated by the previous government. Your government done that.

The purpose today is to remove all wording associated with the sugar tax from the legislation, to expunge it from the legislation. I think the Canadian Taxpayers Federation were supportive of that initiative as well.

So our reason for introducing this to the House is just to clean up the wording in the legislation and it will be history, once and for all.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Minister.

You mentioned the Taxpayers Federation. I'm wondering if you've heard any other feedback for or against recently, since we've been debating this bill in the House.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: I read the comment related to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, I say to my hon. Member – I'm not sure where I read that, but I do cite it and recall reading it. But have I received any other comments about this particular bill since we've introduced it to the House? No.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I know we're in clause 1. I don't want to forget it in the future, so I'd like to ask a question about clause 5: Collection of tax. Clause 5: "The minister may designate a person as an agent of the minister for the collection of the tax imposed under Parts III, VIII, IX and IX.1 of this Act." I think I got my Roman numerals right. I might have made a mistake with that.

I'm wondering if the minister can clarify who the agents of the minister are who collect this tax or who would have collected this tax.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: The tax was collected – as the Member would know, that would come under the government's Finance Department but it was collected by the commercial outlets throughout Newfoundland and Labrador from the taxpayers who could least afford it. Our goal here now is to expunge and to repeal all related wording to the sugar tax.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I am wondering if the minister can clarify in terms of the definition of sale, I see that it's changing. I wonder if the minister can tell the House about the difference between the definition of sale, what is today and then the change that are making today.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: I say to the Member that there's no relevance to what we're doing today. All we're doing today is repealing and expunging all language associated with the sugar tax. It will fait accompli and terminate all remnants of this tax that really wasn't favourably received by Newfoundland and Labrador. Certainly, not by the Opposition to the previous government. They, really, 120-plus times had spoken negatively about the tax and its removal.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

At the time, we opposed this for the simple reason that it did nothing to make food more affordable, like a carton of milk more affordable. Even with the tax, I would argue, that a two litre of Pepsi or Coke, sugar sweetened, was more expensive than a carton of milk. So it came down as to where that money was going to be used and whether the tax was efficacious is another matter.

But I'll come to it this way. In 2016, 2018, Britain introduced its own tax on sugar-sweetened drinks. It was called the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, or SDIL, and it was basically focused, Chair, through you, to the minister, on forcing manufacturers to reform their habits and what they produce.

Basically, it's interesting that over 50 per cent of manufacturers changed their formulas before the tax was implemented, so they would have been exempt from the levy. Basically, at that time – and this is from the Canadian Medical Association Journal – sugary drinks with five grams of sugar per 100 milliliters were taxed at roughly 34 cents Canadian. Up to eight grams per 100 milliliters is about 45 cents in Canadian terms.

At the time, pure fruit juices and milk were excluded. Groups lobbying wanted the tax to be extended to other sugar-sweetened

products. Part of the drive behind that, Chair, was that the obesity in the UK health services, the cost of the health system was about \$9.5 billion in Canadian dollars. In 2025, they lowered the threshold from five grams per 100 milliliters to 4.5 and they widened the policy to capture dairy and plant-based milk drinks, sweetened drinks.

Here is where I'm going with this, too, because independent studies show that it actually led to a positive outcome. They saw a 12 per cent reduction in hospital admissions for tooth decay that required tooth extraction. From zero to four, 28.6 per cent reduction; five to nine, a 5.5 per cent reduction. I guess the purpose there wasn't about so much getting people to change their ways as much as it was to get the manufacturers to change their ways and save themselves from having it levied against them.

The question, I guess, I would have is: In making this decision to make it permanent and to remove all the language around it and so on and so forth, I'd be interested, in making that determination, was there any research done or any analysis done as to what was the effect of it? Was there any information as to whether it actually had an impact on the consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks?

That's the first thing. As I said, I would have probably supported it if it had been more about subsidizing healthy food.

Basically, the question is, is there any information on how the sugar-sweetened beverage tax affects the consumption of sugary drinks in our province?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: I state to the Member, I'm not aware of any data that would indicate that that tax on the consumption of the

beverages had any impact in Newfoundland and Labrador towards consumption.

I can recall stating, and I know that it was cited here, with a beverage company that we had met with prior to the tax being implemented, they thought that the incidents of the diet drinks were increasing even prior to the tax being levied and brought in. They presented the data to know that, in Newfoundland and Labrador, the purchase of the diet drinks were increasing. So there was a trend before the tax came in that the diet drinks were going up.

I know that when it was stated in *Hansard* about what they were going to collect from this, they had stated it was \$9 million. I think that was the Finance minister in Question Period that stated \$9 million. We know that \$12.5 million came in rather quickly into the coffers, so it exceeded what they had anticipated. That's not data, but I'm not aware of any data. I think the only thing that the previous government— that you would've been aware of — would cite is that there were some recommendations from various groups to think that attention on reducing sugar consumption and the tax itself — I think it might have been the Diabetes Association. She might have cited one time that they would've been in favour of the tax. I'm not familiar with any data that might have been available.

Remember, I think the UK, what you had cited, was on the manufacturer. That would have been a different look than what ours would have been if that tax was rolled out that did that.

One thing we all agreed with in the House I think, no exception, was that we need to reduce our sugar consumption. How you go about doing that, that's the question that we were left with. Our contention would be you do it through education. You do it through labelling. We create the health-conscious conversations that we need to reduce our consumption. That would have been more

effective than what the tax would have been.

I think one thing stated before was, if nobody follows you, if nobody follows you in the taxation the way you've got it rolled out, that's usually indicative that they paused. There's something they didn't see the merit in, to the point of which our government previously brought it in. I would think government saw the light and terminated the tax, but we all still stand together knowing that we need to reduce our sugar consumption.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre, and the Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

I would agree with the minister on the need to reduce sugar, especially as you get older and so on and so forth, I would argue. The other part, I would also agree with the minister that there's an education piece, and with that comes the information on the packaging, but I think they're tandem. There's an education piece so that we're driven to look at the labelling and, right now, we're following through on it.

However, what the minister did say was — at least if I understood him correctly — that there seemed to be a greater consumption of diet drinks in the beginning. Now diet drinks have their own problems, certainly with the use of artificial sweeteners, such as aspartame and so on and so forth. I don't know where we go here but down the road, with regard to a manufacturer tax, the tax in Britain actually forced manufacturers to reformulate or change their formulas for the sugar-sweetened drinks. That didn't necessarily lead to an increase in diet, but it also meant, as I understand, that Britain had a severe problem when it came to obesity, teeth and so on and so forth.

I guess, going forward, maybe there is an opportunity here at some point down the

road, that if we're talking to the manufacturers of drinks in this province, you have an opportunity, maybe, to start changing the formulas voluntarily. I know Pepsi is the only manufacturer here in the province.

My concern here is, I think if it had been towards, let's say, reducing the price on healthy food and if there's a way we could bring this tax in without impacting the consumers directly, I think it'd be worthwhile considering. If I'm hearing you correctly, maybe, if at some point this is brought up, this might be something that government would, at least, be willing to have a discussion about, not necessarily to support, but be willing to entertain and explore further. Would that be correct?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: That would be absolutely correct. I think any time, yes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We can't forget Pleasantville, for sure. It's a big piece of the district. It's a growing piece of the district, believe it or not.

Thank you, Mr. Finance Minister, for answering questions in Committee for us. I've got a few questions and, hopefully, we can make this as painless as possible.

You campaigned during the last election on three pillars, if I remember correctly, and I write them down: lower taxes, better health care and safer communities. I think I've heard it once or twice in the House –

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

B. DAVIS: Once or twice. You can probably say it a few more times just to make sure that it's ingrained in my head.

I think my colleague before me raised the point that the sugar-sweetened beverage tax was reduced to zero back in May, starting in July, I think. There was time to give manufacturers an opportunity to put that into place.

I wanted to ask if a member from my community, Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, was to purchase a bottle of Pepsi today, what would the tax be on that said Pepsi, and if they purchased that exact same – well not the exact same because they already have it. If they purchased the next one the day after we bring this bill to fruition, what will the cost differential be on that bottle of Pepsi?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: The hon. Member nailed our three pillars. He nailed it really well, but he had missed the whole purpose of this bill; it's just to expunge it.

We know what happened in May and we know in July, what came in. I'm sure the hon. Member is well aware of what the taxation would be before and what it would be after. This bill does not do that; it just cleans up the legislation that all the remnants from this tax is removed. We're just cleaning it up and, again, we take great pride in that we really pushed the conversation that the sugar tax must go. We feel proud of our efforts in that at that time.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

I say Pepsi because that's what all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should drink, I guess, because that's what's bottled

here in this province. It's important that we support the workers in this province, like we talk about many, many times.

I just wanted some clarity to make sure I'm reading this bill correctly, which I'm sure I am. I know you purposely won't say what I want you to say on this one, but what I'm hoping you'll say is that there's going to be no change. We're cleaning the bill up.

I'll say it for you, and you can agree with me if what I'm characterizing is correct. That bottle of Pepsi I bought today, if I bought it after this bill is put to Royal Assent, say tomorrow or the next day, that same bottle of Pepsi will be the exact same price as it was today, prior to this piece of legislation coming forward, am I correct?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: I say to the hon. Member, I addressed it in the speeches that we did remove – through taxation on grocery purchases and the sugar-sweetened beverages that were purchased through groceries, we did have a tax hit and it did lead to pressures on the affordability in Newfoundland and Labrador.

To repeat, we didn't agree with the tax being rolled in, as you know, 120 statements had been presented to the previous government. There was no other province that followed the previous government on the taxation, but we're glad that the previous government did reduce or take away and remove the tax. They did; we supported it wholeheartedly. In fact, we were your greatest cheerleaders when you removed it; we weren't when you put it in, nor were Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Yes, there is no change. We're cleaning up the legislation to make sure that we repeal whatever, related to the sugar-sweetened beverage tax, exists.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

I have a very good cheerleader over there from the MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, I guess, on this, which is excellent.

Can the hon. Finance Minister let me know the actual amount of revenue was collected?

I think he said it in his initial speech when he brought this piece of legislation forward. I'm after mislaying my paper. I can't remember if it was \$12 million or greater than \$12 million that was collected for the period of time that the sugar tax was in, can you just remind me of that?

If he doesn't have it in front of him, that's okay. I'll appreciate that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: From memory, I can give you a ballpark figure. I would think, in the first year, it was a reduced amount that may be less than \$9 million. Then, I think it was \$12.5 million in year two, and I think it hit probably \$12 million in the final year. So if you look at the accumulation of all those taxes, over \$30 million the sugar tax had garnered or collected from residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you to the MHA for Bonavista.

What was the revenue that was collected used for?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: The revenue went straight into the coffers of government – straight into the coffers of government. The government of the day highlighted two or three charitable givings for a portion of that money, that \$30-plus million. What was given was only a drop in the bucket to what was collected, but I'm sure it went to support social programs, as the money today without the tax goes to support social programs.

Kids Eat Smart was one of the beneficiaries of it. I'm sure there were others as well but not to the value of what was collected, a small portion of it.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair – Deputy Speaker. Sorry for the demotion; I didn't mean that.

I think, for the Finance Minister – thank you for the charitable causes – Kids Eat Smart is correct. I think it was the glucose monitoring systems. I think, too, school food is coming to mind, but I could be wrong on that part. There was a significant amount of money went in school food, somewhere around – I don't know – \$60 million or something.

Thanks for the clarification, it went to general revenue. I think that's correct. I think everything goes to general revenue. It doesn't have a specific target except for what the government targets at the day, is that correct?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: That would be correct. I'd just like to make sure I confirm for the listeners and the House of Assembly that the total

amount collected from the sugar tax was \$34.5 million; not a bad estimate, if I must say myself. That's good.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: That's a pretty good memory. That's pretty close. No one's going to fault you over here for that, coming up with over \$30 million and you saying \$34.5 million. That's okay.

The MHA for Bonavista made a very good point a second ago. He said one of the reasons why we shouldn't have kept this going, which is a fairly good assessment of why, is no other jurisdictions picked it up, right, no other jurisdiction picked up putting a sugar-sweetened beverage tax within Canada or around the world? I don't think you've alluded to around the world, but it sort of shed some light on the fact that I'm hoping the government, in future debates and future times, will look to see the light in some of the things too; because, I think the Future Fund highlights a great opportunity to look at the light of Norway, Alberta, Alaska, who set up Future Funds with great success. There's some opportunity for us to take it to pass success of other countries and/or nations to do that.

I think that's all my questions I have for the sugar-sweetened beverage tax, the repeal of that legislation. Thank you very much for your time. If you have any statements, that will be great to hear.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: I just want clarification for the record. I didn't utilize that no other jurisdictions in Canada followed the sugar tax as a reason for stopping it. It was a validation that they didn't see the merit in doing it, and that was my reference.

Just for clarification, we all agree that we need to make sure we educate Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on the overconsumption of sugar, the dangers and the ills associated with it, that is clear. I think we need to make sure that our curriculum and education is current and at least the children in our school system – I think those conversations in our health care clinics ought to be more informative and directive into what we all agree that we need to make sure to improve the health and welfare of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Yes, I just wanted to say thank you to the Minister of Finance. I never wanted to say anything incorrect that you said. I was just trying to summarize what I thought you meant. I think that's just the same sort of thing. The reverse of what you said is what I want you to think about with the Future Fund, that's all.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the minister as well for taking the questions here. I don't have a lot of questions here but certainly, as a fairly new MHA, who wasn't around for the discussions of the former sugar tax, whether it be in or out, and as a proponent for healthy living and affordability, it's a double-edge sword here is what we're dealing with but there is absolutely no benefit to penalizing people regarding using the sugar-sweetened drinks. We know that.

We don't want to be penalizing people –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

It's hard to hear the speaker.

S. O'LEARY: We do know that, obviously, overconsumption of sugary drinks are bad for your health and I'll just reference, in our province, we know we have one of the highest rates of colon cancer for the country. Cancer in general, sugar is one of the worst things for anybody who is dealing with cancer or anything like that, and sugar eradication is one of the first things that anybody who is going into a new diet certainly has to tackle.

It's this delicate balancing act between making sure that we're not taxing people with affordability issues, people who are going to go out and avail of these drinks. I do agree with you, Minister, in regard to the aspect of not penalizing people, and education.

However, I guess what I would task you with at this point in time is about anything beyond the education component of health living. Because we know that the diet in our province, of many of our Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, has been on a steady decline in lots of ways and that has to do with not only agriculture, us moving away from grown foods. I know, in my particular situation, my mother grew up on a farm and they ate the food that they harvested themselves. We don't live in that kind of world anymore.

I'm a huge proponent of education, but I certainly would ask you, Minister, if you would be able to avail of any other opportunities, the roads that we can go down in regard to incentivizing healthy eating. I know this is a costing thing that we're dealing with right now and I am very supportive of the measure of eradicating it, but we do need to do more.

So I just wondered if there's any incentives that we can do above and beyond what has been presented here.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: Your colleague had mentioned earlier about would you be open to conversations going forward about what we can do collectively in the House of Assembly for all the things that we value and, without repeating, you stated it quite well.

All the components that were mentioned from the labelling to the education, to the conversations that would occur within the health care system that's serving, they all have value. I think, like everything, you need to plan efficiently and make sure that you've got collaboration in place and come up with something to make sure that we become a healthier population.

All we know is that it's not through taxation, to tax them and, often, those who can least afford the tax are the ones that are – the majority probably are the contributors to the tax contribution.

But it needs to be a conversation and I know today isn't for that, but we certainly need to have a conversation on that and that probably needs to occur with a high degree of frequency. I think for good governance, that's on us as part of that conversation. Everyone that's elected here in the House has a role. We have PMRs that come up, the things that we can do to throw out there to say let's be united and let's put some tangible actions in place.

We can do it. I think we've got the will to do it. We just need to make sure that we get it done.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair, and thank you for that.

Yes, we do need to collaborate on creating a healthier society in our province. There's no doubt about it. We certainly have had a great history of local food production and, as well, we see a growing desire to have homesteading and smaller growing farms – the ability for people to avail in their communities of more cost-efficient approaches to buying food.

I mean, anybody here who is responding to any of their constituents would know that the cost of food and groceries is just an escalating issue. It does drive the choices of the type of food that people are availing of and, later on, the illnesses that people are succumbed to are costing our health system.

You can't think about one thing without its connection to everything. That's really, I guess, what I just wanted to task the minister is with that I am very intent, certainly we are very intent, on having those discussions about how we can support healthy food options. Education is certainly one component of that; however, there are many things that we need to do to incentivize.

While I'm fully supportive of laying this sugar tax to rest, not having been part of the discussions about it previously, the only other question I would ask of you, Minister, would be the specifics around where that money was funnelled. I think there was some discussion about it with the Kids Eat Smart program and things like that, but I was unclear about where that taxation money went.

I certainly would be very dismayed to find that any of that money wasn't going into those organizations, because I know the fantastic work that they do in the school system. My children certainly availed of those school lunches and the Kids Eat Smart –fantastic program. So if you could speak to that.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: Funding, it was then and it is now, is that money goes into consolidated revenue. It is not earmarked. It goes into government functioning as to whatever the government decides that they would do. What the previous government did was highlighted some of those areas like the Kids Eat Smart and the diabetes, those functions – ones they already supported.

The glucose monitoring was one, I think, that was a new one that was added specifically during this. The other ones were already being contributed to, but I know the MHA for Topsail - Paradise had a petition many times for glucose monitoring. I know that because I was sat close to him and heard it on many occasions that we lobbied hard for that.

Then they claimed that a portion of this money would go towards that. But it went into consolidated revenue for whatever the government decided it could do. But you can rest assured that \$34.5 million collected did not go into all the programs that we're referencing.

What amount it was, I can't begin to tell you. But I doubt it would be a quarter of it that would've went into the programs. That's just a speculation now. I don't know that one, but I'll just throw that out, just doing the math on what the contributions were. A million sounds like a lot that they were contributing to one of these meritorious programs. But when you think about it, you had \$34.5 million collected, and if the million is over three years, well, three versus – still, it's a small amount.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the minister again for that discussion

and for clarifying for some of us who are new here to this discussion.

One of the things that I certainly would love to leave this conversation with, and this Committee, is avid support for increased food sustainability. There are so many smaller businesses that are now starting to grow ways that people can economize on growing green, healthy vegetables in refrigerator, kind of, settings.

I even know on the campaign trail, when I was knocking on doors, encountering individuals who were entrepreneurs, creating these wonderful ideas. There are cooperatives, of course. We've got Food First NL. There are a number of people who are doing the work in communities to ensure that healthy food is actually becoming more accessible, especially to people who lack the affordability.

So that's my lens. That is the one that I really want to keep an eye on. Certainly we want to keep an eye on making sure that people are not relegated to the \$1-, \$2- and \$3-grocery store scenarios where you'll never see anything green because we're just continuing to snowball into the health system after that.

But anyway, my final comments, and I want to thank you for that, and yes to collaboration.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: Just for the record, I 100 per cent agree. I think we have a lot to do. The Forestry, Agriculture and Lands Minister had mentioned it many times as far as what we need to do. We need to improve our food security. There is no doubt about that. We need to make sure we've got the availability, not only in metro, but in rural parts of our province, and it can be done.

There are other jurisdictions that are good ones that we can use as a litmus test and as a beacon to follow. I don't know a lot about it. I know that in Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, they were saying it really is making good inroads with their food security and with their greens and with their hydroponics on the island. They're an island too; we're an island.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Seeing no more speakers, shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 5 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 5 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 4)

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 4 without amendment.

CHAIR: It is recommended that we rise the Committee and report Bill 4 without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters referred to them referred and have recommended that Bill 4 be passed without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends Bill 4 be carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time presently.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: I move that Bill 4 now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: Do we need a seconder?

L. PARROTT: Seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 4)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 4.)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Labrador West, that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Before we depart, however, I want to remind Members that today, at 6 p.m., the Social Services Committee is considering the Estimates of Social Supports and Well-Being; and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. Tomorrow, at 9 a.m., the Social Services Committee will be considering the Estimates of Municipal and Community Affairs.

This House is now adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, May 5, 1:30 p.m.

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