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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**SPEAKER (Lane):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to raise a point of order, as well as a point of privilege, as well as one of contempt. For the Standing Order, I'll speak a little bit further about it, but I refer to Standing Order 7.

Last night, an email was sent from the Office of the Speaker to all Members of the House of Assembly, stating: I wish to, again, bring my email below to the attention of all Members and caucus political support staff regarding photography/videography in the parliamentary precinct, particularly for partisan political purposes.

There have been violations of these long-standing practices and protocols by some caucuses in the General Assembly. Further, some caucuses have not complied when the House has requested they remove content in question. These protocols and practices have been and will continue to be applied consistently by the Speaker and House to all Members and caucuses.

I, once again, ask that all hon. Members and caucuses respect this institution of Parliament and comply with the long-standing practices and protocols of this House.

Now, Speaker, as I said, I received this email last night or yesterday evening. I never had a chance to read it. I didn't read it until the House closed at 5:30, so this is the first opportunity I had to bring this forward.

Speaker, first, some background. I will say that sometime shortly after the general election, I filmed a short video clip. We

posted it online, with footage from the hallway next to the Chamber. Shortly after, I was advised that posting videos or pictures from the parliamentary precinct without the approval of the Speaker was prohibited. I was unaware of this and the video now has been removed.

In relation to my points raised today, I refer to passages from the *Members' Parliamentary Guide* which says: "A breach of privilege occurs when one of the privileges of the House or of a Member is violated. The key element to these affronts is that they interfere with the ability of the House of Assembly, or its Members or Officers, to carry out their parliamentary duties. Examples include disobedience of an order of the House and interfering with a Member's ability to attend a sitting of the House."

"Contempt of the House includes any offence against the authority and dignity of the House or interference with its process. Unlike privilege, the categories and circumstances giving rise to contempt are not closed. Thus, a finding of contempt is determined on the facts of a particular case. It is not necessary to find a breach of an enumerated individual or collective right in order to find contempt."

The guide continues and says upon raising the issue, "the cited facts may be claimed as: both a breach of privilege and a contempt; a breach of privilege that is a contempt; or a breach of privilege."

Speaker, in this case, I am raising this factual background as both a breach of privilege and a contempt for the reasons I will continue to explain.

Now that I've raised the issue, as the Speaker knows, he must determine whether there was a prima facie case. As per the *Members' Parliamentary Guide*: "Prima facie simply means 'apparent on its face.'" Speaker, it could not be more clear that it is apparent on its face, given that you have

sent an email already stating that the rules have been broken and despite you ordering the photos be removed from social media or online, Members are not abiding by your ruling.

In fact, I'll refer back to your email which states two things unequivocally: There have been violations of these long-standing practices and protocols by some caucuses in this General Assembly. Further, some caucuses have not complied when the House has requested that they remove content in question. So the rules have been broken and there's no compliance with the request by you to remove the content in question and remedy the breach.

What I do not know, Speaker, is what Members you were referring to in your email or what consent, if any, has been given for photos that have been posted online. What I have seen is photos of the PC caucus in the Chamber, a photo of the Finance Minister in the Chamber while he was giving his Budget Speech and a photo of the Tourism Minister signing a proclamation, all within the Parliamentary precinct. These are clearly photos being used for partisan purposes, as you outlined in your email.

If there was no consent given for these – and I'm not sure if there was or not – it is a serious issue, especially if they have been ordered to be removed, by you, yet remain online.

Speaker, as I do not know who your email was directed to, only that I can state, based on your email, there has clearly been contempt, it is incumbent on you, in order to maintain the rules and sanctity of this House, to identify the Members and rule accordingly. In fact, it is your words that said there must be respect for this institution of Parliament and comply with the long-standing practices and protocols of the House.

The simple answer is to identify the Members and they agree to remove the

photos or videos, and we can move on with House business.

Speaker, based on what I have said and what your email said, it is clear to me there has been contempt. As for a breach of privilege, if the rules are not enforced and, in particular, if your ruling is not enforced, I submit that some Members are being treated differently than others Members and, therefore, those Members have had their privilege breached as they cannot do their jobs to the same extent as other Members who are acting under different rules. Therefore, if steps are not taken to remedy the breaches, we will assume the rules relating to posting videos and pictures in the Parliamentary precinct without the consent of the Speaker no longer apply.

Finally, I will speak to the point of order. Standing Order 7 speaks about order and decorum. If rulings of the Speaker are not followed, then order is not being maintained in this House.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Government House Leader to respond to the point of privilege/order/contempt.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Speaker.

Since the House came into session back in early March, we have seen pictures being taken, obviously, on both sides of the House, and I agree with the Leader of the Official Opposition. We don't know where the pictures came from, which ones are being referred to right now.

I suspect there may be other people who have been contacted internally and there is an email trail somewhere that says that either one of the parties were asked to take things down, so we'll bottom that out internally. There is no question.

What I would say is I do know there are instances where there are pictures. For

example, on Budget Day, I know the Deputy House Leader came to you and asked permission to do things.

The point on decorum is a big thing here. We are in a situation where we are in a House where there has to be respect all the way around. To be quite frank, I have said lots of times, I wish cellphones were not allowed in the House to be quite honest, because we sit and an individual is looking at their phone – and it happens on both sides – it may look like their taking a picture of another individual or whatever, and there are things happening, either way it is not acceptable. That is one thing that is for certain; it is not acceptable.

I would think that sometimes people get excited too, right? In the instances where we have seen pictures being taken over there, it's people standing up for their first speech or whatever and someone turns around and takes a snap. While it's not acceptable, it happens, and it would be okay for you to make a ruling on that, but the cellphone usage in the House, I think, is over the top at times.

I do believe that everyone in the House understands the issue at hand. I think that there has been lots of instances where there has been video and photo taken inside of the precinct that still remain online, and I think it's time for us all to realize that everyone in the House sometimes steps over that line.

So we'll leave it at that, and we'll let you rule, but I do believe that we can all do better in here.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** I will take the matter under advisement and I will provide a ruling to the House at a later date, once I've had a chance to consider all that's been said and research the matter thoroughly.

Today, in the public gallery, I'd like to welcome Stephanie Power, chairperson, and board members, Sylvia Goodyear and Meaghan Dicks, from the Gander International Heritage Lounge Foundation, which is the subject of a Member's statement.

Welcome.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** As well, visiting the gallery is Mr. Leo Cose, who is the subject of a Ministerial Statement today. He's accompanied by his wife, Carol Anne; his son, Blair; and his daughter-in-law, Kitty.

Welcome, Leo and family.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Corner Brook, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, Gander, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and Labrador West.

After that, we have some Members requesting leave to give statements as well.

The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. PARSONS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Breast cancer affects you before, during and long after you get it. It takes a physical and mental toll.

Eighteen years ago, Joan Penney and Judy Woolridge started a meeting for breast cancer survivors in Corner Brook called Breast Friends to share the experience of living through breast cancer, provide advice and, most importantly, support women like them. That meeting still happens every month, now led by Joan and Shirley Porter.

The monthly meeting over tea and coffee has evolved into more. Seeing a need to provide outreach to more women on the West Coast, Breast Friends now runs an annual conference for women with cancer. The participants hear from physicians, health professionals, counsellors, hairstylists and cosmetologists. They touch on every technical and emotional subject about dealing with cancer and dealing with its aftermath. They share their stories, their triumphs and they strategize on advocacy for better access to health services for women like them.

This kind of grassroots community organization makes meaningful impacts on women fighting cancers, and their families.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in saluting the dedication and passion of the Breast Friends.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**E. LOVELESS:** Speaker, on April 30, 2026, J. Petite & Sons Ltd. of English Harbour West closed its doors after more than 130 years in business.

Mr. Gordon Petite worked extremely hard to run the successful business until his passing in 1985. His daughter, Debbie Petite, then took over the enormous responsibility of a business that employed 65 or more people and was rooted in the fishery – buying and curing salt fish, with schooners carrying their products to Spain, Portugal, Italy and the Caribbean.

Over time, the business expanded into wholesale, delivering goods by boat along the South Coast and later by truck. It ran a fuel business, supplying the fishing industry and local households and later they got into construction. It operated heavy equipment,

tractor trailers transporting lobster to Boston and bringing goods back from Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. It was a business deeply woven into the fabric of the South Coast region.

To use Debbie's words: Over those many decades, there have been countless stories of my father, friendships and memories made with loyal customers, past and present staff, who made the business a success. As the song says, "those were the days my friends, we thought they'd never end!"

I ask all Members to join me in saying thank you to the Petite family.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Gander.

**B. FORD:** Thank you, Speaker.

I rise to recognize the Gander Airport International Lounge, which, in March 2026, was officially designated a Registered Heritage Structure by the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Constructed in 1958 and opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1959, this iconic space remains one of the finest and most intact examples of mid-century modern jet-age design. Its sweeping open layout and geometric terrazzo floors are complemented by significant Canadian artworks, including Kenneth Lochhead's mural *Flight and Its Allegories*, and Arthur Price's sculpture, *The Birds of Welcome*.

This designation would not have happened without the vision and leadership of the International Lounge Foundation's volunteer board of directors, whose work ensured this remarkable space was preserved and reimagined for future generations.

Today, the International Lounge is a living cultural hub. It is home to social enterprises: The Globe Theatre; the curated retail shop, Gander Goods, featuring Newfoundland and Labrador products; Gallery 59, showcasing NL artists; a community-use boardroom and special event space enhanced with contemporary design elements by local artist, Jessica Waterman.

Congratulations to the volunteer board members and employees with the International Lounge Foundation and the Gander International Airport Authority. The International Lounge is a symbol of who we are: welcoming, creative and connected to the world. I ask all Members to join me in recognizing this designation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Speaker.

I stand today to recognize the important work of The Helping Hand in Bay Roberts, and to congratulate a dedicated volunteer on her retirement.

Located on Patterson Street, The Helping Hand has been serving the Bay Roberts region for over 30 years as both a goodwill centre and food bank, providing clothing for men, women, children and babies, as well as household essentials to individuals and family in need throughout the region.

Organizations like The Helping Hand play a vital role in supporting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians during difficult times. They provide essential resources, promote dignity for those accessing support and reflect the compassion and generosity that define our communities.

Speaker, I also wish to extend sincere congratulations and gratitude to Darlene Kearley who retired May 1, after managing The Helping Hand for the past 21 years. Her years of dedication and service have made a meaningful difference in the lives of many, and her commitment, kindness and generosity have helped strengthen her community and improve the lives of countless residents.

I ask all hon. Members in this House to join me in thanking Darlene for her service, wishing her a happy retirement and recognizing her outstanding work for The Helping Hand.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. POWER:** Thank you, Speaker.

It's always an honour to rise in this House to speak about Labrador West.

Labrador West ski season runs from late October until the end of April, early May. It's really only four months of the year you can't ski in Lab West.

Menihek Nordic Ski Club is your Nordic ski destination in this province. The club began operations in 1975 and has become a high-performance training centre for Canadian national, provincial, divisional and international cross-country ski teams with over 34 kilometres of groomed trails.

Menihek trails cater to skiers of all ages and skill levels. The club has a membership of over 400 skiers, and it introduces 300 children annually to the wonderful sport of cross-country skiing.

Each year, Menihek hosts the Great Labrador Loppet. This event is one of the most prestigious events to take place in Labrador West. There are 5-, 10-, 15- and 20-kilometre cross-country ski events and a 10-kilometre snowshoe event, plus a 2.5-kilometre and 5-kilometre youth ski and snowshoe events.

This year's event had a visit from Mother Nature and had to be postponed from March 28 to March 29 due to extreme temperatures of less than minus 50. Although the weather wasn't much warmer the next day, it seems everyone enjoyed their day on the trails.

I would like to congratulate and thank the volunteer organizing committee, the sponsors and supporting groups for another successful Loppet and ski year at Menihek Nordic Ski Club.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Does the Member for Harbour Main have leave to present a Member's statement?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Speaker.

Today I rise to recognize the outstanding achievement of Indy's Innovators, the robotics team for Roncalli Central High in Avondale.

From April 29 to May 2, the team competed in the FIRST Robotics World Championship in Houston, Texas, alongside over 19,000 other students from 66 countries.

This competition is the largest K-to-12 international robotics competition in the world. Indy's Innovators is the first team in our province's history to qualify for the FIRST Tech Challenge competition at the FIRST Robotics World Championship.

Indy's Innovators consist of students Sean Allen, Natalie Beh, Riley Branton, George Green, Keagan Kane, Connor McConnell, Dominic Penney, Edward Simpson, Mary Tulk, Ruth Tulk and Chad Walsh. They travelled in the competition alongside their coaches, Cory Green and Natasha Green, and their school principal, Joy Ricketts.

Together with the Pearce Panthers from Pearce Junior High in Burin, who also participated in another competition at the same event, all of these students were fantastic representatives for our province and made us all proud.

Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating these students on their huge accomplishment and to wish them great success as future STEM professionals in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Does the Member for the District of Windsor Lake have leave to present a Member's statement?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**SPEAKER:** Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for Windsor Leave.

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to all the Members for granting leave.

I rise today to honour the life and legacy of Bernard "Fox" Reddy, a true pillar of Newfoundland and Labrador's soccer

community and someone who has left a lasting impression on all who knew him.

Over a distinguished 33-year career, Fox was an exceptional player and leader. From Holy Cross junior championship from 1966 to 1969, he advanced to a decorated senior career that included a gold medal at the 1988 Canada National Soccer Championships, along with a silver and bronze finishes at the national level. He also earned bronze at the 1969 Canada Summer Games, was named to the 1979 provincial all-stars, captured the St. John's senior scoring title and was named St. John's MVP in 1978. He also competed with MUN's varsity team.

As captain of eight consecutive Holy Cross teams, he helped lead the club to 15 straight St. John's senior titles and, later, shared his knowledge through coaching.

Inducted into both provincial and the St. John's Soccer Hall of Fame, Fox carried a proud family legacy. Remembered for his humility, kindness and gentle presence, his impact has extended far beyond the game.

I ask all Members to join me in a moment of silence in honour of Fox Reddy.

(Moment of silence.)

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

You may be seated.

Last, but certainly not least, the hon. the Member for the District of Topsail - Paradise is requesting leave to present a Member's statement.

Does the Member have leave?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Topsail - Paradise.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

First, as a Holy Cross alumni, I truly appreciate the comments across the way on Fox Reddy. He's certainly going to be missed in the soccer community and at our alumni meetings that we have. So thank you for that.

Joesphine Woodfine, affectionately known as JoJo, was born in Northern Bay in 1923. She married her husband, Andrew, of 60 years and raised six children. Josephine lived a full life of love, where family had always been and is still the heart of her life.

She was always stepping up to help, whether at church, a community event or just volunteering wherever needed. She was a great baker, known for her homemade rolls and buns, and have become so well loved over the years.

Since moving to Karwood Retirement Centre in Paradise, Joesphine has continued to bring warmth and joy. She enjoys being social, taking part in a wide variety of activities, listening to music and enjoying a good cup of tea, paired with something sweet. When visiting the centre, I am always delighted to have a chat or a dance with JoJo. She is a true joy to be around.

Yesterday was her birthday. She got to go on a party bus, and that's a statement that you're never too old to party.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in celebrating a true milestone for such a wonderful person as JoJo celebrates her 103rd birthday.

Happy Birthday.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Wow! How wonderful is that.

Statements by Ministers.

**Statements by Ministers**

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Women and Gender Equality.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

I rise to recognize today as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirited LGBTQQIA+ people, also known as Red Dress Day.

The red dress has become a powerful Indigenous symbol of those who have been lost forever from their communities, often without justice or closure for their loved ones. Each empty space in a family or community leaves a void that can never be filled. I only have to look to my own district, where loss is carried through generations of grief, people and communities have been forever changed.

Indigenous women, girls and Two-spirited LGBTQQIA+ Indigenous people throughout our province face higher rates of violence than their non-Indigenous counterparts, so on this day we stand in solidarity with families, survivors and communities and support them in seeking justice and healing. Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women in Canada. Indigenous women are sexually assaulted three times more often than non-Indigenous women. Most of the women and children trafficked in Canada are Indigenous.

As Minister of Women and Gender Equality, I hear the voices of survivors and families, and I am committed to supporting their calls for truth, justice and lasting change. Their stories matter. Their lives matter. We will not forget, but we must all do better.

Change is coming.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

I join the minister in recognizing the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirited LGBTQQIA+ people.

Today is not only about remembrance; today is about responsibility. Across this country and here at home, Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people continue to face disproportionate levels of violence. Families are still waiting for answers, communities are still carrying grief and too many feel that justice remains out of reach.

Words of solidarity matter, but they are not enough.

Families and survivors are looking for progress, that means making sure supports are accessible, communities have the resources they need to feel safe and that the systems meant to protect those people are working as they should. We owe it to the families and survivors, not just to remember them, but to follow through. Today and every day, we must measure our commitment, not by what we say, but what we do.

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, and I thank the minister for the advance copy of the statement as well.

Safety from violence is a fundamental human right, and we must do everything possible to end the ongoing genocide against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. For far too long this crisis has been neglected, and it requires immediate, substantive action.

We call on this government to backup declarations with deeds. Please work alongside families, survivors, advocates and Indigenous women to identify concrete solutions and back them up with the necessary resources.

Thank you. Wela'liq.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. WALL:** Speaker, it is with much sadness that I rise today and pay tribute to the late Egbert Thomas Albert Walters or, as he instructed everyone to call him, Eg.

Eg Walters passed away on Sunday at the age of 77.

Eg will be long remembered for the decades he spent at the helm of the Community Food Sharing Association, growing the food bank distribution network in our province. Over the years Eg championed many fundraising and public awareness campaigns from the donations at the annual Christmas parade to the turkey drive on CBC.

Through his tireless work, Eg brought attention to the need in community, while making it clear at the same time, that the solution was in our hands; all we had to do was give a little of what we already have.

Speaker, beyond his many accomplishments, Eg Walters will be remembered most for his kindness and

deep compassion he had for others. He believed firmly in the simple but powerful idea that we should all look after each other. Eg never judged those in need, instead he met everyone with dignity, respect and a generosity of spirit. He reminded us that community is built not on grand gestures but through everyday acts of care and empathy.

Speaker, I offer my heartfelt condolences to his family and friends, and I am sure that all Members of this House of Assembly will join me in acknowledging the late Eg Walters as we stand in a moment of silence.

(Moment of silence.)

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

You may be seated.

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

**K. WHITE:** Speaker, I am honoured to join the minister as we pay tribute to Eg Walters, a remarkable example of the kindness and service that strengthen communities across our province.

Through his decades of dedication to the Community Food Sharing Association, he ensured that no one was forgotten and that dignity remained at the heart of how we support one another. He reminded us that even in the face of great challenges, solutions can begin with simple acts of kindness. Eg Walters leaves behind not only an extraordinary record of service but a powerful example for all of us in this House and beyond. His life's work calls on us to do more, to care more and to lead with compassion.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I extend my heartfelt condolences to his family and friends. A cherished member of our community and a resident of St. John's West, may his legacy continue to guide us.

Thank you, Speaker.

**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 his statement.

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Eg Walters and we pass on our condolences to his friends and family.

I knew him through my volunteer work with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and I can tell you that he was a remarkable man, whose generosity led him to a life committed to helping the poor. Although he will be missed, we can take comfort from the fact that his legacy lives on.

In honour of Eg, I would encourage everyone listening in this House to make a donation to the Community Food Sharing Association and to your local food bank for carrying the load at this time.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** A great man, a great Newfoundlander and Labradorian for sure.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, serving the public is serving the province and every act of service strengthens us all.

I stand today to recognize Leo Cose, an exceptional employee of my department, as he retires at the age of 83 from his supervisor role at the Renew's depot after more than a half a century of dedicated service.

Leo began his career with the department in 1972, starting a journey defined by integrity, commitment and a deep sense of responsibility to the people of this province.

Throughout his career, his passion for public service never wavered. He understood that the work done at the depot went far beyond equipment and schedules – it was about ensuring the safety of the motoring public.

Speaker, Leo was known for his constantly monitoring weather forecasts and road conditions, day and night, especially during challenging storms and harsh winters. His decisions were always guided by care, experience and an unwavering focus on keeping roads safe for everyone.

His work ethic was truly extraordinary. He led with quiet strength, consistency and humility, setting an example that earned the respect of coworkers. Even after decades on the job, his dedication never faded.

As he closes his remarkable chapter, we extend our heartfelt thanks for his lifelong commitment, leadership and service. His legacy will continue to be felt at the Renew's depot for years to come.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

**J. KORAB:** I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Speaker, the Official Opposition joins in recognizing Leo for his contribution to public service as he retires at the age of 83, which I thought was a typo when the sheet was handed to me, Speaker. It's glad to have you, as well, Leo, and your family here today.

Public service acts as a vital yet, often, unseen foundation for our province, maintaining critical systems and services we depend on so much. It's fuelled by the commitment of individuals who place the well-being of public service at the forefront of their work.

The minister says Leo is constantly monitoring the weather forecast, which, as we know, is a full-time job in this province.

Leo, while the equipment at the depot may have changed, the standard of excellence you've set is permanent. We thank you for 50 years of service that proved a public servant's greatest tool isn't a plow or a grader, it's a genuine commitment to their community.

Thank you, Leo. Enjoy your retirement.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**S. O'LEARY:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

On behalf of the NDP, I congratulate Mr. Cose with his 50 years of public service. Wow, what an incredible achievement, and we thank him for his unwavering dedication.

As we honour Mr. Cose, we should be demonstrating our gratitude to all the employees of the public service who keep the province running in spite of enormous challenges. For their sake, please review and update the Job Evaluation System so these hard-working public servants are paid what they are truly worth.

Thank you, Mr. Cose.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Big thumbs up, Leo. Good job, buddy.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

During the election campaign, the Conservatives promised to secure all of the topside work for Bay du Nord. Now that they've finally shown us the agreement, it shows what we suspected all along.

What the agreement says is "due to project execution risk, the Proponents are unable to commit to Fabricating Topsides Components in the Province ...."

So I ask the Premier: Why do the Conservatives agree with Equinor that Newfoundland and Labrador workers create project execution risk?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I'm glad to be able to stand in the House of Assembly and talk about a Bay du Nord project, which was on the books, I think, way back in 2018, which the Liberals failed to get across the line.

Well, let me tell you, we've got that benefits agreement right now, and do you know what's important about that benefits agreement, Speaker? It's something that the Trades NL workers are proud of and support this project. It's something that the federal government – the federal, Liberal government supports this project.

The only ones who don't support the project are the former government over here, the Liberals of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, it would be a better deal if the Conservatives could live up to the promises that they made, because the agreement states in lieu of fabricating topside components in the province, the proponents shall provide the province with funding in the aggregate amount of \$200 million over five years.

To be clear, in lieu means instead of. So the jobs, opportunities, tax revenue and GDP growth is worth more to the Conservatives than \$200 million.

Is \$200 million what the Premier thinks workers in our province are worth?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'll reflect on what the Premier just said. In 2018, when this came about, these guys gave the whole project away – not a part; they gave the whole project away. They gave away the swing gates in Argentina as they built the West White Rose extension; 100 per cent of the topsides for the West White Rose extension was built down in Corpus Christi and that's okay, that's all good for them.

This Premier brought home a deal that sees a subsea agreement. It sees for the first time in this province life of benefits for the whole execution and operation of the project. It has apprenticeship numbers. It has significant fabrication. It brings new industry in subsea business –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** – that will not just go on to the first two wells that are drilled, but every piece of work that happens (inaudible) –

**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 this project to proceed and we're happy to see the benefits that are in the agreement. What we're surprised to see is that the agreement says these are the benefits you are not getting.

Equinor has actually said that the \$200 million was and – I quote – compensation for not being able to build the topsides in Newfoundland and Labrador. We know \$200 million won't come close to covering the construction costs of a dock.

So why did the Premier sell out the benefits of work being done in our province for a project that might never happen?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** The Leader of the Official Opposition says sell out; I say he delivered. He delivered on his promises. We now have a subsea industry in this province for –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** – the whole life of this project. It is massive.

These guys were going to do –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** Here it goes – here it goes.

Five thousand metric tons of fabrication – we're going to do 15,400, not including the 9,000 that will come from the dry dock – 24,400, five times the amount that they had agreed to and they think that we sold out. They sold out, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** I would be shocked if the minister actually thinks not getting any topside work is a good deal for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, because I've heard him on this side of the House advocate for that.

Not only does the Premier think our workers are only worth \$200 million; he's not requiring Equinor to pay this until six years after the project is sanctioned. To make it worse, let's assume oil is \$100 barrel and Bay du Nord projections at a billion barrels, Equinor stands to make over \$100 billion and we get \$200 million.

Given the failure to get topside work, why didn't the government get more for us than 0.2 per cent? Equinor is making 500 times what we're making on our resource?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** I'm not sure what document they're reading, but I don't think that's exactly how it goes.

Speaker, this project is based on 430 million barrels, not a billion. Is there a possibility of a billion? I hope there are five billion out there, because every single barrel that comes to shore is for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** They walked away from the subsea work. They were going to give it away, and they were going to do it for \$150 million for fabrication. He may stand and say that's not true, but just a few weeks ago, he stood in here and said this was the same agreement that he negotiated. Then, we heard that he hadn't even talked to Equinor.

I would suggest that he gets up and sets the record straight on that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** I would say, if the minister hopes and he gets five billion barrels of oil, guess what? We still only get \$200 million. So the deal gets worse and worse for Newfoundland and Labrador the better it gets for Equinor.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**J. HOGAN:** After months of secrecy, we know why the government decided to release the documents now and not two months ago; they were busy redacting it. Pages and pages completely blacked out, Speaker, including sections on equity options and costs. There are other sections we can't even see what the sections are about because they redacted the title.

Why is the Premier going back on his promise of transparency and hiding, not only key elements, but all elements of this deal?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Speaker.

I would suggest that you look at the report I'm holding in my hand right now. Everyone here, I hope you can see it, because that's the reports that they have released in the last 10 years – absolutely nothing. Forget about employment and contracts to do it –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** Forget about all of the contracts that we have in place for construction, they didn't release the Rothchild report. They didn't release anything on Snows Lane. They didn't release anything about their secret vote in Cabinet to give themselves bonuses. Now they're complaining about a contract that we put out that takes the legal and the financial liability away.

We can't compromise the people that we're in a contract with; they know that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I'm glad this is the second time the minister said he supports releasing Cabinet documents to the public. I look forward to when we want one and the Premier will release it on the minister's advice to disclose Cabinet information to the public.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. HOGAN:** The Atlantic Chamber of Commerce released a statement that says, "On the matter of the Churchill Falls agreement, prolonged uncertainty carries its

own cost. Delays in decision-making can undermine investor confidence, slow the development of critical infrastructure ...."

Yesterday, the Premier held a press conference to say I'm going to hold another press conference in three weeks – talk about delay. Why is the Premier undermining investor confidence in Newfoundland and Labrador?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I've done exactly what I said I was going to do.

We were presented with an MOU; what we wanted to make sure was this is the best deal for Newfoundland and Labrador? We sent that to an independent review committee to review and do the work.

They've done the work. It's now going through a technical review and a legal review. I said I would release it publicly. It will be released publicly, and it will be presented in the House of Assembly.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** I've never heard anyone in Newfoundland and Labrador say anything other than they want the best deal for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; however, I've never –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. HOGAN:** – heard a leader not commit on what he thinks a good deal is.

So if the Premier really believes in advancing this deal, can he finally tell us,

does he believe in the MOU or not? A simple question for you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I believe in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; that's who I believe in.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** And I believe in making sure that if we're going to sign something up for 50 or 60 years, we need to take that time to review it.

We've done that; we have the review. It will be made public on the date we said, and it will be tabled in the House of Assembly for all to review.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** It's been a year and a half, Premier, and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador don't know how you feel about the deal. They didn't vote for people to do panels; they voted for the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and you are not doing what they asked you to do.

The Atlantic Chamber of Commerce also says: Churchill Falls has the potential to unlock substantial investment, create thousands of jobs, strengthen energy security.

Why did the Premier appoint a biased panel to undermine Newfoundland and Labrador's opportunity, rather than stand up and be a leader and tell the province how he feels about the MOU?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is missing the point.

With all due respect, it isn't about him. It isn't about me. It isn't about just the people in the House of Assembly. It's about all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** So let's make sure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador understand exactly what's in the MOU. We said we'd send it for a review; we sent it for a review and that review will be presented on May 19.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier is the leader of this province, so it is about him. He has to lead and tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians where this province is going. He has delegated that authority to three individuals that were hand-picked by him; the secrecy was behind how they were picked.

Who picked them? How did they get their résumés? What other people asked to do this?

So I ask the Premier: Please tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians when this is going to happen?

Not one file has moved in terms of the MOU since you have been elected; nothing is happening. Premier, do you believe in this MOU or not?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** In the last 180 days, there are a lot of files that have moved forward in this province.

In the previous 173 days, not one thing moved forward while he was the Premier – not one thing. There's been zero credibility; there's been zero transparency, other than the fact that we can see right through them.

As a matter of fact, I would have called it the "Shaggy" government, "It wasn't me."

Listen, at the end of the day, this is a good agreement for the province. We are going to take this MOU, have it reviewed by the proper people. The only change in this panel is the one individual, who had a preconceived opinion of it, that he appointed and that he used to work for, is no longer on the panel. If this government didn't handcuff those people, it would have went through the way it was.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**F. HUTTON:** Mr. Speaker, here is our agreement, the MOU; and here's their agreement, can you see the difference?

You can actually read the MOU; \$225 billion that they're getting ready to squander on the advice of who knows.

Former Trades NL executive director, Darin King, said, in 2023: He doesn't see why most of the work, including topsides – when he was referring to Bay du Nord – shouldn't happen here. He said everything can and should be built here. Now he's an advisor to the current Premier.

So can the Premier answer why he didn't take his own advisor's advice?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Speaker.

We're certainly not going to take the advice of the former premier's previous advisor or employer.

Speaker, Bob Fiander, the current senior executive on Trades NL: This is a pivotal moment for Newfoundland and Labrador, a generational form from a work perspective. I think over time, the work on the drydock, through maintenance, is going to dwarf the topsides construction.

We have an opportunity now with this dry dock to construct it in its entirety at Bull Arm by unionized tradespeople, and when that construction is completed and goes into operation, we have so many opportunities in the defence sector and other areas.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**F. HUTTON:** Speaker, it's funny that, during the campaign, they said they wouldn't sign a deal with Equinor and BP unless there was 70 per cent of topside work done here; none of it is done here.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**F. HUTTON:** By the way, the head of Trades NL told us in a recent meeting, he really wants the MOU to go through because that would mean a lot of jobs and money as well.

Now also back in 2023, Darin King said that the topsides are similar to that of Terra

Nova and SeaRose, the FPSOs, which were constructed here.

Why does the minister think today's Newfoundland and Labrador workers can't do the same work they did for those projects?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** Speaker, in 2026, we secured 31.3 million person-hours; their previous agreement was 22 million. We secured 23 million person-hours, 12 million for them.

Speaker, listen, first oil – you guys never had that. Apprenticeship targets – we got that. Fabrication – 24,000 tons –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** You guys got five.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** Millions of barrels of oil, 430 million – 300 million. Expenditures – \$27 billion; you guys got \$11 billion. So if you want to go back in your time machine and talk about what we got and what you didn't, then perhaps you should read the document.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**F. HUTTON:** Mr. Speaker, when they throw away the MOU and the potential of \$225 billion, there's going to be a lot of people wishing there was a time machine where we

could go back and kick these folks out of the picture.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**F. HUTTON:** By the way, the minister opposite is failing to mention that the scope of the project changed from 2018 to 2023 when the project was shelved by the proponents.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier claims he was waiting for the late biased report to continue negotiating with Hydro-Québec on the MOU.

Can he confirm whether or not anyone else has been externally retained other than the panel members to review, negotiate, advise or plan in relation to Churchill Falls next steps? We're not talking about Premier Danny Williams who claims, as he's pulling all the strings, that the deal is actually dead, that it was his greatest accomplishment.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** The first thing I'd like to do, Speaker, is to ask the hon. Member across the way, perhaps he should stand up and tell what the Liberal government said to Mr. King when Trades NL went to their office and asked for all these things. I can tell you what they said. They said, not a chance.

The same thing when they eliminated the \$100 million swing gates going to Argentina and create industry for a lifetime in this province, guess what they said? Nah, we'll take the money. We don't need the gates.

The same thing they said when they were lobbied about topsides for the West White Rose extension being done here in the province, what did they say? Nah, we're going to send that to Corpus Christi. Same thing they said about the new hospital – we don't need to put that out to tender; we're

going to give that to our buddy at Marco. The same thing they said about the penitentiary – we're going to give that to our buddy at Marco. Give us a donation; we'll look after you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**F. HUTTON:** Premier, we're hearing reports that you have appointed a former Danny Williams era Cabinet minister – no big surprise there – to advise and negotiate on the Churchill Falls MOU.

Can you confirm?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Yes.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**F. HUTTON:** Speaker, can the Premier confirm who it is and why it wasn't made public when that hire was made?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** We've been doing the business of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We continue to do the business of Newfoundland and Labrador. We intend to –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** We will get the best deal. We will make sure we'll get the best

deal for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island – and I want order.

**F. HUTTON:** Mr. Speaker, I was at yesterday's news conference that the Premier held, saying that it will be another three weeks before he holds a news conference. While I was there, it's funny because the guy who was supposed to be hired and paid by MCP, Dr. Des Whalen, was standing in the lobby of the Confederation Building for about a half an hour –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**F. HUTTON:** – watching what the Premier was doing, talking about the MOU. Now there's somebody else.

Why wasn't the other former Danny Williams Cabinet minister – why wasn't this made public? How much is he being paid, and what is the role that he's playing?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** Speaker, I find it laughable that they're talking about transparency. At the end of the day, like I said, and I've said a million times, they are the most transparent government the province has ever seen. The people seen right through them. That's why they're over there and we're over here.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** He can wave the contract in the air that has redactions in it. They didn't produce one agreement – not one. He's going to stand up and say, oh, we gave you the MOU. Guess what? The MOU was signed before it came in here for debate. They wouldn't allow us to bring any witnesses in. It was all under their guise.

So it was not transparent. It was transparent because we could see through it and so could the province. That's why we're here and they're over there.

Now, Speaker, at the end of the day, this is laughable. It's absolutely unbelievable.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I just spent four days travelling around the province –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. DEMPSTER:** – and all I heard consistently was how disappointed people are and the mistake that they made, redacted under the cloak of darkness, the decisions have been made, no transparency there.

Speaker, we've heard from families of seniors living with dementia who are still in community and can only get seven hours of home care a week, and the list they're on for long-term care is a year long.

What is the minister doing to keep our seniors safe while they're awaiting long-term care?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, the hon. Member will know that we've got a lot of construction that is planned and ongoing and will start this year in relation to personal care homes and long-term care homes, because we know that we inherited undercapacity for those seniors and those people with dementia to be accommodated in their rightful place and the best place of service.

It takes a little bit of time for us to get the structures ongoing. We'll have the programming; we just need to get the structures going that can accommodate the needs that are out there, again, because we were left with an undercapacity in the province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, a patient in this province has been suffering from lockjaw for months. She has lost more than 100 pounds; she is dying in her home and no solutions are in place. She needs to leave the province for surgery, yet out-of-province help is being blocked because it is being classified as dental.

So I ask the Premier: Will you intervene today to ensure this patient gets the help she needs before the outcome is detrimental?

It's a policy change, that's all it takes and that is where we will see better health care for all of us. We need action and no longer words and slogans.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, if somebody is in pain and suffering, and if it's a simple policy, we will look into it. We've been reviewing a lot of things that we've inherited. I would just

say, the policy she's talking about and change, well, we've inherited that policy if it exists, if this is a specific case like she's talking about –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. EVANS:** – but, Speaker, as Minister of Health, I have to enact change for everyone, not an individual.

So if an individual is suffering and it's undue harm, we will address it; not just for that individual, we will address it for the people in the province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, that is really, really concerning. A woman is home dying; she's exhausted all options. We've reached out to the department multiple times. We've reached out to NLHS. We've spoken directly to the Health Minister, and to say that that woman can't get help until all of health care can be fixed for the half a million people, that's pretty discouraging today.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. DEMPSTER:** Premier –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. DEMPSTER:** They can't continue to talk about what they inherited. They're in the driver's seat now. They're at the wheel. How long have people got to wait for change?

Premier, the Minister of Health was clear last week when she acknowledged that health-related transportation issues in

Labrador are a mess and she is unable to get the support from her Premier to fix them.

Why is the Premier ignoring the advice from his Minister of Health on these important issues relating to Labrador –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, I am sick and tired of being taken out of context.

I actually said at the beginning of the interview that we will fix these problems because I have first-hand knowledge. I have things in the works to address 10 years of Liberal government that they didn't fix it.

In actual fact, if you want to talk about truth, why did this Liberal government that's sitting in Opposition now actually cut medevac service, not only from my district, but for the District of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair? Before that Medavie contract was signed, they actually said it was too expensive, so they went back and cut the medevac service for Southern Labrador and for Northern Labrador.

Then –

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

Order, please!

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, given that the minister was clear on Budget Day that there was a disagreement in relation to medical flights to and from Labrador, are there any

other health-related issues that the Premier does not see eye to eye with his minister on?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, the story that CBC carried, I think, was inflammatory, I'll say that. I'll live and die on that hill, Speaker.

I'll also live and die on the hill where I will not let medevac services be eroded for Southern Labrador or for Northern Labrador. I have to go back now and try to fix that. In actual fact, my biggest supporter is sitting there, it's the Premier of the province.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, can the Premier clarify, is he in agreement with his minister that Labradorians do need to go to court to ask a judge to provide health care?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, sadly, I have lived experience about people dying from failure to access health care. Before I became a Member of the House of Assembly and as an MHA, I actually had relatives die, who I know would be alive today if they could access health care.

Back in the day, that was something that we had to live with. Now we don't because we actually have –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. EVANS:** – good representation on this side, Speaker. I am actually going to address the issues, and it's not going to be taken out of context by media anymore because –

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier announced May 19 as the public release date of the report of the review committee on the Churchill Falls MOU. When the Premier was Leader of the Official Opposition, he and I publicly demanded and achieved a special debate in the House of Assembly where all Members could question NL Hydro and other experts involved in negotiations.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to doing the same with this review?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, one of the challenges we had when the MOU was brought to the House, it was already signed. We asked for independent people to be brought into the House of Assembly so we could question them, other than the ones who negotiated the MOU, and we were denied.

At the end of the day, they started a review which we now know handcuffed the members of the review committee – had handcuffs placed on them –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** – didn't have the terms of reference.

We turned around, put a new independent review in place, they've done the report, it will be released on May 19 and presented to the House of Assembly (inaudible).

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I was asking about a special debate.

Speaker, oil companies are reaping billion-dollar blockbuster profits, in many cases doubling first-quarter profits, as a result of the war in Iran and driving up prices of groceries and gas and causing the cost of living to soar.

So I ask the Premier: What other actions will he take to protect the people of Newfoundland and Labrador from the cost-of-living shock caused by the windfall profiteering of oil companies?

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** I say to the hon. Member, many occasions we've said in this House that we've put out \$226 million of affordability measures in this recent budget. That is going out to support people.

We've also stated that we realize that we are in an affordability crisis, mainly driven by the price of oil at the pumps. We've also stated that we're going to keep an eye on that. We're going to plan to make sure that we can provide more for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in due course, because we're fully aware of what the affordability issues would be, Speaker, in

the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In addition to the \$226 million, we have other measures that we put in place that will lead to the affordability.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. minister's time is expired.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**S. O'LEARY:** Speaker, on Red Dress Day, we acknowledge the ongoing genocide of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people and stand in solidarity with families, communities and loved ones impacted by violence. For far too long this crisis has been neglected and it requires immediate substantive action.

Will the minister bring in legislation to adopt and implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Women and Gender Equality.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, I'm glad that the Member of the Third Party acknowledges the harm done to Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited people.

At the end of the day, there was a national inquiry. There are Calls for Justice; we are working on the Calls for Justice. I have a personal knowledge of the hardships that are caused, not only the harm done to the missing and murdered, Speaker, but to the families.

A lot of times, families don't have answers but, for me, is why did a lot of people actually move from their communities to make them more vulnerable. It's because

they didn't have warm, safe houses, affordable food, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**S. O'LEARY:** Thank you, Speaker.

We have a shameful history of Indigenous discrimination rooted in colonialism and, with the evolving world of social media, this discrimination is only becoming more harmful and more targeted. This behaviour is unacceptable and unfair to our First Peoples.

I ask the minister: Will your government commit to working with equity-seeking groups to develop a provincial plan to combat hate, including the creation of a dedicated hate crimes investigation unit?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Women and Gender Equality.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, as a child of a family of residential school survivors, as a child who has a history of Indigenous family members being harmed by colonialism, Speaker, I understand the harms.

At the end of the day, we have to do more. We have to do more, and for me, we have to address the inequity. If we're going to start real, true reconciliation, we have to address the inequity; affordable housing, being able to heat your house, being able to feed your family, basically have access to education, these are the harms that's been done unto Indigenous people, which makes them vulnerable.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The time for Question Period has expired.

The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

**J. KORAB:** A point of order, Speaker, Standing Order 49.

Bantering and chirping, Speaker, are part of this House of Assembly, certainly during Question Period, but as per Standing Order 49, the Minister of Energy and Mines during Question Period referenced and looked over here and said: Bunch of fools.

So I ask the minister to apologize and retract that statement.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines to the point of order.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Speaker.

Webster's Dictionary defines the word fools as people who lack good sense, judgment or wisdom, often behaving silly or in an unwise manner.

I stand by my words.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** Speaker, I stand on a point of order.

**SPEAKER:** We're still dealing with the other point of order.

I'm going to take that one under advisement. I just want to be clear on the definitions in terms of parliamentary language and so on before I rule on that one. So I will take it back and rule at a later time.

The hon. the Government House Leader on another point of order.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Speaker.

I stand on a point of order, article 49: Offensive Language. “No Member shall speak disrespectfully of Her Majesty, nor of any of the Royal Family, nor of the Governor or Administrator of the Government of Canada; nor of the Lieutenant-Governor of this Province; nor use offensive words against any Member in this House. No Member may reflect upon any vote of the House except for the purpose of moving that such vote is rescinded.”

Speaker, when we came in House this afternoon, the Opposition Leader stood on his feet and he talked about decorum in this House and contempt and the way things work. What I would say is that during Question Period, the Member for Waterford Valley continually chirped over there that this is not the Premier. So if we’re going to talk about respect of this House, this man is the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, duly elected –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** – and doing the job he was put here to do. This man represents the province, represents the Crown and represents this institution. If we’re going to stand in here and talk about the institution and the rights therein, then nobody in this House should question an elected Member, what position they’re in or how they got here. It undermines the individual, it undermines the House and it certainly undermines the electorate that elected him as the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition on the point of order.

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Just to be clear, when I did my point of order and privilege and contempt earlier this afternoon, it was a very specific fact scenario dealing with social media and postings and rulings and emails you’ve made. While I think decorum is an important part of this House of Assembly, my point of order and privilege and contempt was not about chirping back and forth. It was about something that you had sent out in relation to photographs and videos being taken in the parliamentary precinct.

In response to that, the Government House Leader then stood up and said he believes it’s important and we can all do better with regard to decorum. Then here we are now just a half hour later and he thinks it’s appropriate to call Members of the Opposition fools. I don’t think that’s acceptable.

I will say, too, in response to the chirping happening – and the Member for Waterford Valley did say that chirping does happen back and forth. Just to clarify, I did hear what he was saying. He was not saying that the Premier of the day is not the Premier. We were asking questions to the Premier and another minister was answering; he was saying that’s not the Premier. That is not the person who we directed the question to.

Now, I understand the Premier does not have to get up to answer the question. Any minister can get up and answer that question. I’m not trying to say otherwise, but that is the context that I think, you need to understand before you make a ruling on that point of order.

I would also say, Speaker, saying that, I would submit, is it not unparliamentary language in any event.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** I will likewise take that into account. I do thank the Member for providing that context. It is helpful, but I do

need to review the tapes and so on and I will report back.

But I will say that decorum has certainly not been stellar this afternoon. I think we have much more important business to be attending to, the people's business, than be going back and forth, tit for tat on all of these issues. I would ask Members to govern themselves accordingly as we move forward this afternoon, and please bear in mind who elected us, why we're here and what we're actually supposed to be doing.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### **Tabling of Documents**

**SPEAKER:** In accordance with the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, I hereby table the 2026-2029 Activity Plan for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### **Petitions**

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

**S. O'LEARY:** Thank you, Speaker.

Once again, a petition to implement GPS ankle bracelet monitoring system. These are the reasons for this petition:

Intimate partner violence numbers in Newfoundland and Labrador are unacceptably high and immediate action is needed. Women live in fear and some have died. Those accused of violent IPV crimes are often released on bail with few conditions.

When arrested for breaching, they are released again on similar conditions. This pattern increases danger to victims and our community. Last year, Provincial Court Judge Wayne Gorman expressed his frustration in a judgment saying, why are release orders so spectacularly unsuccessful in protecting women from their intimate partners when those partners are charged with assaulting them?

In Newfoundland and Labrador, electronic monitoring is currently only used in a pilot project for convicted offenders on parole or probation. Ankle monitoring for bail release is used in Quebec, PEI, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba, in some places specifically to protect women from their abusers and is proving to be very effective.

Therefore, 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 immediately as an option for the courts when those accused of seriously violent or repeated IPV offences are released on bail conditions. To ensure its efficiency, the program should include GPS-based zones of exclusion around dwellings, workplaces and schools and GPS mobile zones of exclusion for victims who request this.

I will table this petition and just a few added comments here. Certainly this has been discussed repeatedly in this House of Assembly the absolute necessity for this extra support for people who are victims of intimate partner violence. This is a very succinct way that we can prevent lives from being lost or damages to families.

I have personal experience with a family member who died in a situation such as this, who could potentially have been saved by this implementation. I urge the minister and the government to not delay, to continue to listen to the voices of the people in the community. I know that there are

consultations going on but we can consult until we're blue in the face, the reality is this is a proven effective measure and we need to see it here in our province.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety for a response to the petition.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the Member for raising this petition again in the hon. House of Assembly. I have addressed it as well in other petitions in reply.

I can say that the importance of consultation, that cannot be understated. I know that the Member has stated the urgency and I understand that urgency, but we also have to ensure that all components of this ankle monitoring system are explored so that they are effective for the unique circumstances of our province.

I can say that I have asked officials of the Justice Department to explore the feasibility of implementing electronic monitoring for persons that are out on bail. We know that it is in existence for people that have been convicted, but we are committed to creating a province where everyone feels safe and we are committed to ensuring that our courts and our entire justice system is modernized.

I have met with many individuals and groups on this. I still have more that I am meeting with. I have another meeting with Violence Prevention Avalon East coming up shortly. That is important as well. We want to make sure that we hear from all voices that have something to say on this important issue.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

**M. KING:** Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for and background of this petition:

Route 470 is the primary transportation link for residents, businesses and communities from Port aux Basques to Rose Blanche, including Fox Roost-Margaree, Isle aux Morts, Burnt Islands and La Poile.

The current condition of the road, marked by deteriorating pavement, dangerous potholes, poor shoulders and inadequate signage, has made travel increasingly difficult and unsafe. Residents have raised ongoing concerns about risks to drivers, delays in emergency response and the movement of goods and essential supplies.

The condition of Route 470 also affects residents' ability to access vital services, including health care, education, government offices and justice-related services located outside their communities. When the road is in poor condition, travel becomes unreliable or unsafe, creating barriers for individuals who must leave their communities for medical appointments, school transportation, employment and other essential needs. This has a disproportionate impact on seniors, families with limited transportation options and those requiring frequent travel for health or social supports.

Investment in Route 470 is essential to the safety, well-being and long-term sustainability of the communities it connects.

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 commit to and carry out comprehensive

road improvements on Route 470, including resurfacing, shoulder rehabilitation, improved drainage and any other upgrades necessary to ensure the road meets a safe and acceptable standard and supports reliable access to essential services for residents of the Southwest Coast.

Speaker, I would note that this petition here that I have is signed by a number of residents of the community of Burnt Islands, but I know that this is an issue that's important to all the communities that I listed.

This route is certainly the most important route and vital for our residents of the communities along the Southwest Coast to access services, as I've mentioned here previously, in Port aux Basques. Talking about my district, Port aux Basques is certainly the hub. It's important for those communities to have reliable roadways to access those services and to be able to get to where they need to go and to get there safely.

I will say, Speaker, I know there has been comments made before about petitions from the minister in the past, but this is not about me. My name is not on this petition. This is about the residents of my district who are bringing this to me as their representative, that is a concern to them. We are seeing it this time of year, with the melt and thaw of the winter season, the conditions tend to increase in severity. So we're hoping that the crews out there have the capacity, have the things that they need to address those issues.

They're getting brought to me daily and I certainly appreciate the work that they do, but as long as the people of my district bring these issues forward to me, I will continue to stand here, no matter how many times, no matter what day of the week or what month, apparently, from comments made before as well, that I will come here any day, any time to present the issues that matter to the residents of my district, to be their voice in the House of Assembly to make sure that

government hears them and to act accordingly.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** No further petitions?

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:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 9.

**SPEAKER:** It's been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 9.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

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 9, An Act to Amend the Future Fund Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Future Fund Act." (Bill 9)

**CLERK (Hawley George):** Clause 6.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 6 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Chair.

We're talking about clause 6, and clause 6, while it seems there's not very much in the bill – it says, "Section 11 of the Act is repealed" – section 11 of the act essentially enables the act to have regulations. In fact, today, in clause 6, we are talking about all the regulations associated with the *Future Fund Act*.

The regulations do a few substantial things. I just refer directly from the regulations, paragraph 3, "The portion of non-renewable resource royalties required to be deposited into the fund under paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Act shall be calculated as follows," and then there are (a) to (g) outlining the percentage and the amount of money maximum, so different tiers and categories, of how much money, depending on oil and gas revenues, would go – sorry, non-renewable resource royalties; I just want to make that distinction – the portion of non-renewable resource royalties, instead of flowing to the Treasury, would go into the Future Fund.

Getting rid of clause 6 essentially removes all of this, which is extremely disappointing. For example, "(a) 2% of the amount of non-renewable resource royalties received up to \$250,000,000," and then it goes 5 per cent, 10 per cent, 15 per cent, 25 per cent, 50 per cent and 75 per cent.

Regulations are very interesting instruments. There are two different types of regulations. I'm not sure if these are Cabinet

or if these are Ministerial regulations – these are Cabinet regulations. There are two kinds of regulations, there are Cabinet regulations and Ministerial regulations.

Ministerial, the minister actually can just sign off on a regulation change and then it gets put in the *Gazette*. The *Gazette* is a very boring, but extremely important, legal record of Newfoundland and Labrador that the lawyers use. I understand the subscriptions to the *Gazette* paper versions are going down, but it does go online; it is published in the *Gazette*.

Then the Lieutenant Governor, when a regulation says the Lieutenant-Governor in Council makes the following regulation, that means Cabinet. Cabinet can, at any time, make changes to the regulations.

I think it's useful for the government to be able to have regulations that give it flexibility, because the House of Assembly sits many times, but there are also parts of the year where the House of Assembly doesn't sit. A lot of unforeseen things happen and, while it is made public after it's published in the *Gazette*, I do think allowing Cabinet to make changes to regulations is useful in terms of adapting to situations.

For example, if there was a new MOU Churchill Falls contract, the government, from a legal perspective – I'm sure they'd have to make a few other changes, but let's just say the government signed a contract with Hydro-Québec or someone else on Churchill Falls and Bay du Nord. They could just update the regulations so that a percentage of that fund went into the Future Fund, and that would be a Cabinet change. They could make that change and not come back to the House of Assembly.

I do think regulations, in principle, are a very useful tool of the government. When I was in Service NL, there were many changes to the *Highway Traffic Act*. They were all very boring, but we routinely made changes to the *Highway Traffic Act*, like a certain size of

something changed, a different equipment size changed, a different occupational health and safety element changed, and because the whole House of Assembly doesn't need to talk about all those very specific technical changes.

So in clause 6, we are talking about the regulations, and this is actually removing the regulations. I note that, in the bill, the government are changing the principle that non-renewable resource royalties will no longer be put into the Future Fund at all, which I completely disagree with from a policy perspective. I do want to note, I was looking this morning, and I did find a quote from the Minister of Energy and Mines of October 12, 2022. He says, "we talk about royalties and stuff ... there is no one bigger on the offshore oil and gas than I am" – I'm sure he'd support that as well. He said, on October 12, 2022, "I'm hoping – I heard the minister say mining earlier – that mining royalties are all included in this because we haven't spoke about it."

I think that was an excellent question for the Minister of Energy and Mines to have asked on October 12, 2022. The minister wanted to make sure that mining royalties were included in the Future Fund regulations, which I think is very important.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**S. STOODLEY:** Yes, so we add mining royalties – the Minister of Energy and Mines talked about how he thought we should have mining royalties in the Future Fund.

We also think that removing the regulations completely removes the government's ability – now, in saying that, we would all commit now that we'll come in here and support the Future Fund if you want to add it back in. If you want to add oil and gas revenues back in, we'll come in and support it. I'll commit to that right now, but having regulations does allow the government the flexibility in that regard. So I think it's short-sighted to remove the ability to have

regulations at all, aside from the fact, as well, that we completely disagree with any percentage of oil and gas revenues or the non-renewable resource royalties going into the Future Fund.

In saying that, I do have some questions for the minister, please.

Minister, I'm wondering if you can outline for the House how much money has gone into the Future Fund under the regulations?

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you for the question. I just want to address a couple of statements that were made before I get to the answer and a response.

The Member for Mount Scio states that regulations are a useful tool of government – 100 per cent. There is no doubt about that. They are a useful tool of government.

We've spelled out what the Future Fund is going to do in legislation. There's no wiggle room in legislation. If we look in the proposed act, clause 4(2), "The net proceeds from the sale of a Crown asset or group of Crown assets with gross proceeds in excess of \$5,000,000 shall be deposited into the fund." That's clear; that's not in the regulations, but it's there in the act, in the legislation. No wiggle room, no Cabinet juggling, it's there.

I guess the most contentious part, when the Member uses the word, several times, "short-sighted," is item (3). Section 4(3), "In addition to the amounts referred to in subsection (2)" – that's the net proceeds from the sale of a Crown asset or a group of Crown assets – "additional amounts may be deposited into the fund at the discretion of the Treasury Board, where the province was in a surplus cash position at the end of the previous fiscal year."

If we had a \$300 million cash surplus, I guess the discretionary part would be, how much of the \$300 million would go into the Future Fund or would a portion of that go into sinking funds to pay off debt that don't have sinking funds attached? Is it conceivable that the \$300 million cash surplus, there would be a portion of that that will go to address affordability issues? That would be the matters of which we would discuss.

I would state, the excerpt that was read by the Minister of Energy and Mines when he was in the Opposition that the Member refers to is absolutely true; that's what they're doing. Not just oil revenues, but all revenues that would put us in the cash surplus, everything in the cash surplus that we would have, would be considerable to go into the Future Fund.

All I can tell you, as Minister of Finance now, is that I'm big on attaching sinking funds to outstanding debt. I would love for a portion of that to go towards debt that's going to come due, say, in 2047. The \$2 billion worth of debt coming due in 2047, with which no sinking fund is attached, of which the previous government put out there with no sinking fund, we would like to initiate a sinking fund on that debt again with the future of our province and future generations in mind.

So you can understand that we want a little bit of capacity, excess sales, the net profit from sales and, when we're in a cash surplus, that money that's in the cash surplus, we would like to put it into the Future Fund. We would like to put it into a sinking fund. We may wish, at that point in time, that we may need to address some affordability issues. The only thing I can say while Minister of Finance, it will not be any political decision. It goes towards those areas that were discussed, and that's what we're considering.

To draw the House back and to bring the House back, we want to enter oil royalties,

keep in mind, we had to borrow. Even through the Leader of the Opposition said that wasn't true, if you've got an operational deficit you're running and you're borrowing to operationalize government, you can't just say that the revenue from the oil wasn't used for operational or for government finances.

We said yesterday, all the money that comes in, goes into the government coffers and, from that, we look at operationalizing government for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. When it comes to the regulations, those two items are clearly in the legislation, which prohibits wiggle room. There is no wiggle room. The only discretionary piece will be how much of that cash surplus will we put to the Future Fund.

I would disagree with being prescriptive, because who would know that in three years time we're in a cash surplus. I wouldn't say you must put a percentage into the sinking fund. I don't think you should say that we should put a certain percentage into affordability and you should put a certain section into the Future Fund, because that is being too prescriptive and that is the genesis of what the Member was stating, that regulations are a useful tool of government and there should be some discretion in that.

So I just want to restate, I know the Member had stated before, when she stood in the House, we will be spending much of this Future Fund in the budget. Absolutely incorrect. Nobody is spending money from the Future Fund. I think the general population now are well aware of that. It took many people in the electorate for a spin, but I think we've done a good job of restating that we're not pulling money out of the Future Fund.

Anyway, I yield back to the next question, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I do just want to clarify that I think it's short sighted to not put any revenues from non-renewable resources into the Future Fund, and to also remove the ability for government to do that from the *Future Fund Act*. I do think that that is short sighted. That's what I was referring to.

Then in terms of the political element of the Future Fund, I would have to agree to disagree with the minister, that I believe it is 100 per cent a political decision. As the law stands today, because we have not yet changed the law, \$185 million, as my understanding and the minister will correct me if I've misunderstood that – as of the law in the land in Newfoundland and Labrador on May 5, 2026, the law is that this government should be putting \$185 million into the Future Fund, and they've chosen not to do that, which is their prerogative. As a result of this law change, that \$185 million is going in their budget circle, which includes the deficit they've announced.

I do think that is 100 per cent a political decision. They would have a moral high ground, Chair, if they had put last year's revenues in the Future Fund and then closed it off, but they don't. Last year's oil revenues, they're not putting that in the Future Fund. They're spending that as part of their budget envelope.

So I do want to reiterate that. I think that is extremely important. I have a few questions I will ask. Firstly, on today, this day, as the law is today, how much money should be going in the Future Fund? I'll ask that question.

I'll come back to the other one. Based on the law today, how much money should be going into the Future Fund.

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

**C. PARDY:** The hon. Member qualified her use of the word "short sighted." I just want to address that before I get to the answer – short sighted of not putting any money from the non-renewable resources into the Future Fund.

Now, keep in mind that when this bill was brought to the House and I gave the overview of what we're doing, our contention was that we have a deficit every year. We borrow large amounts of money. In fact, the government before us added more to the debt than any other government since Confederation. Let me repeat that for effect: The government before us added more debt to the province than any other government in the history since Confederation.

I'm sure there are reasons for that that the Members would like to add to, but what the Member is saying – she read yesterday from a lender, a bond rating agency – Morningstar I believe it may have been, but she can correct me if she stands again – the only thing being, there was a concern about the debt.

The Member today, less than 24 hours, is saying you should have borrowed money to put into the Future Fund. Borrow more and keep adding to the debt. Our stand with the Future Fund is that we don't wish to borrow. Here's the amount that you asked for: \$186 million. We do not have to borrow \$186 million to put into a savings account that would add to our deficit; it would further add to our debt. That is our contention.

I stated also in Question Period yesterday that the government, in programming, had over half a billion dollars that wasn't funded. Not funded means there was no money put in for this current '26-'27. It was either cancel the initiative or find the money to put in.

I'd like to inform the House and all those viewers out there that everything we stated that we've got in the budget, most of what we've got in is pushed out to the five-year forecast that's out past '30-'31. We're financing it; we're budgeting it. That means if we're going to move 3,000 more children, help them come out of poverty by giving them some financial resources, we just didn't do it for this year. It's in '27-'28. It's in '28-'29. It's in '29-'30, and it's in '30-'31.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** So the Member opposite would say borrow \$186 million because that's the way they rolled in the previous government. We are going to control what we borrow. We're going to pay off our debt that we've got as best we could. We're going to add another percentage of sinking funds, without getting into that.

I think we have a plan to make sure that when the creditors look at us in future years, they will say we're making good headway with our plan. Part of the plan is not to borrow any further than what is absolutely necessary. The Future Fund will not be a slush fund.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** Not a slush fund. We're not going to withdraw from the Future Fund and no desire to withdraw from the Future Fund. In 20 years' time, that Future Fund will be \$1.4 billion. We are not withdrawing from the Future Fund, but we're not going to borrow when we have a continuous deficit to put money into a savings account.

Some would say, well, some Members stood and said we do it at home. I did it at home – the only thing being I didn't have outlandish interest charges on my credit card. I might have had a mortgage and I might have had a car payment and I might have saved but if we've got to pay 10 per cent of our income for interest charges on

carrying our debt, I would say that is too high.

If we said to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador that the past Liberal government wants us to borrow \$186 million more to put into a savings account, I think they would have questions on that, especially that we pay \$1.1 billion in interest charges every year to cover the debt that we have. That is the genesis of our Bill 9.

I now, respectfully, pass it back to the hon. Member from Mount Scio.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes Deputy Opposition House Leader and Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

**B. DAVIS:** Now, thank you very much. That's a first.

Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker.

I've got a couple of questions and a couple of statements. I'll start with the statements first because I'm sure the hon. Member is going to let us know if I go off a little bit there, and the Deputy Speaker, if I tend to go off on relevance. I think the relevance riverbanks are pretty wide on this one right now because we're talking about so many different things led by the Finance Minister.

So the exact amount of money that was taken out of the Future Fund since its existence, I think the Finance Minister will agree, is zero dollars. Is that correct?

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

**C. PARDY:** I would ask the hon. Member to ask the question again, and I'll give you a very quick one.

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you.

Yes, the amount of money that's been taken out of the Future Fund since its existence currently – the amount of money that's been taken out?

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

**C. PARDY:** I thought you were going to start with a statement and then you were going to the question; but anyway, zero dollars.

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

**B. DAVIS:** We can agree to disagree on, I guess, the parameters on which we think we should be investing in a Future Fund versus what the Progressive Conservative Party believes is where they should be directing or diverting money from taxpayers into a fund to pay for future generations and future infrastructure and future needs and wants and desires of the province.

What we've seen in this year's budget was, by the Finance Minister's words, over \$200 million in affordability measures. I think it was \$205 million or \$225 million –?

**C. PARDY:** It was \$226 million.

**B. DAVIS:** Okay, \$226 million of affordability measures.

What we've also seen by this piece of legislation coming in today, and by changing this, is diverting \$186 million that would have gone into the Future Fund for future generations to enjoy and utilize –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** And interest to grow.

**B. DAVIS:** – and opportunity to grow. I think that's correct. If I'm incorrect, when I turn it back over to the Finance Minister he can correct me.

So that would be \$186 million diverted, and I think the Finance Minister will say that we have to borrow the \$186 million. I think I've heard him say that.

It's pretty close in tying to the amount of money for affordability measures that had been put in place – \$226 million and \$186 million. So most of the affordability measures that have been put in place by the administration were a direct reflection of the diverting money from the Future Fund that would have been put in – a large portion of it, not all –

**S. STOODLEY:** According to today's law, yes.

**B. DAVIS:** Based on the law that exists today.

Now we know that the government has the numbers, they can change that law today, tomorrow, next week, next month, whenever we decide as a House of Assembly to move forward on that process.

The Finance Minister is always listening and is always feverishly making notes. He always likes to say – and it's 100 per cent accurate, by the way. It's 100 per cent accurate. I'm not saying it's disingenuous by no stretch, because it's 100 per cent accurate. What he is saying is true, that in order to put money into the Future Fund, right now, as it exists today and as the financial situation of the province exists today, you are borrowing money to place money into the Future Fund. He'll agree with that, I'm sure, because I've heard him say that.

Then, several minutes later, there will be a conversation about the sinking funds that will come in. We'll be putting money into the sinking funds – not all the time, and especially in the first initial speech when we talked about sinking funds, because I asked those questions. I really wanted to know. We borrow for those exact same sinking funds we're putting money into.

**C. PARDY:** That's correct.

**B. DAVIS:** He did clarify that throughout, but I want to tie the two pieces together. One is not mutually exclusive to the other, so if we are borrowing to put money on a sinking fund – which is the prerogative of the government. That's where they want to move to right now. I'm not saying that's wrong. I'm just saying it's their choice.

George Jones made a song about choices, and it's all about those choices that we make. That's a choice –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**B. DAVIS:** I'm not going to give you a couple of tunes on that, no, not at all, but it's all about choices, right?

So we're making choices to borrow money to put money into a sinking fund or we could choose to borrow money to put into a Future Fund and a sinking fund, which is what we were doing, those two things. We may not have been doing it as long. We also had Churchill Falls to look forward to.

I think I'll just take a quote. The Finance Minister opened the door to this a second ago when he talked about Morningstar DBRS, which is a bond rating agency across the globe and do some work – some of the interesting things that we hear from them over time talks about our financial position, some of the things we've done either good or bad and they pass judgment on those things.

One of the things that I thought was interesting on the commentary by Morningstar DBRS was that when we remove the incentive and change the Future Fund legislation, as we're doing here today, we remove the incentive to reduce Newfoundland's – they say Newfoundland, but I'll say Newfoundland and Labrador's – reliance on resource royalties to fund program spending. That's their words, not mine. They're very reputable across the

country. They're not partisan by any stretch. They made that point.

I would tend to agree with them on that point, that it's a choice that we're making, and it doesn't make us stronger fiscally. Just like my colleague from Waterford Valley has said many times, I'm not opposed to paying down our debt. We were doing that with sinking funds as well, and I think that's a fairly good strategy for the government to still implore or employ.

The other thing is, we've got the Fraser Institute who made comments, and I'll ask the minister to pass some judgment on those three institutes or three bodies to give us some clarity on those issues.

The Fraser Institute stressed that strict rules and transparency are essential to prevent government from using long-term savings for short-term political purposes, and my colleague from Mount Scio said a few minutes ago, that it's pure political decision making on who we deal with the \$186 million in this fiscal year. Everything after this year is based on a decision point of government in the House of Assembly.

If you change this piece of legislation but put that money in, \$186 million, then this is not a pure political decision. It is an actual policy related decision where you're changing a direction. Right now, it's pure politics, because it allows you to spend that \$186 million that you would currently have to, by law, put into the Future Fund.

I think the Fraser Institute highlights that very nicely from that, and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives notes that weakening the fund now undermines its potential to support future economic transformation in this province. Like many of the other funds that we've talked about, whether that be over in a sovereign fund in Norway, or whether it be what we see in other jurisdictions like Alberta or in Alaska, and many more besides, these are just the ones that I wanted to highlight tonight.

So I'd ask the minister if he can pass some comment on those three reputable institutes. I have a little bit more to say after that, if the minister could please let me know his thoughts on why the people in the province shouldn't trust what those three reputable agencies are putting forward.

**CHAIR:** Before I recognize the minister, I just want to say to the House that I know that we're in the Estimates process as well and, in there, we go back and forth a little bit more fluidly. But for Broadcast, I need to acknowledge the person that I'm acknowledging to speak. So if you could just be patient with that and let me acknowledge the person prior to us moving forward.

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Chair.

The Member used the word "diverting" \$186 million, and I will say maybe quote me between \$182 million to \$186 million. I said I think for the record – I wouldn't want you to come back tomorrow and say, well, it's not \$186 million; it's \$182 million. I will say that is the range, no less than \$182 million and no more than \$186 million.

We're not diverting; it's just the fact that we're not borrowing to do it. It's not a matter of a diversion. If the hon. Member was thinking that we're now going to spend the \$186 million on our affordability package and our budget and said that's a conscious political decision we're making, well, our expenses has increased from last year's budget, the previous Liberal government, by 1 per cent. So you know that 1 per cent doesn't equate to the new dollars.

When Morningstar suggests about their issue, it's usually about our reliance on an oil-based economy that we know that the fluidity and the vulnerability of oil – that's what they're concerned about. If we're banking on oil revenues in order to make sure that we become more fiscally sound

going forward, then that is what they would have their concern with. Maybe a lack of diversification.

The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi talked about the green technology and creating the hydroelectricity as somewhere where we ought to be headed. Then that is certainly something that we ought to be pursuing, according to Morningstar, is that we need to further diversify. I do believe, under the guidance of the Minister of Energy and Mines, that we will have some diversification into the green technologies and the renewables in very short course. I do believe that.

When he mentions about weakening the fund and he mentions about sinking funds, then I think all the bond rating agencies would like to think that, in preparation for the future by stepping up and attaching funds to pay off that debt when it comes due, is an investment into the future. I don't think anybody would argue with that.

Castle Building Supplies was my first speaking engagement where I talked about sinking funds. They thoroughly enjoyed it and thought it was a great idea. The hon. Member for Mount Scio was at the Board of Trade. I'm not sure if she spoke with anybody after that, but I think in the sinking funds and that part of the plan that we would be addressing debt payment, well, the commentary that I received after that was quite positive. Those were initiatives that we would be pursuing in our plan in tackling the sinking fund to try and pay off debt more quickly.

As household budgeters would look at, lots of times we need to curb our spending. We need to curb our spending in order to realize savings. That's fair, but we still invest in things that have value. So if the Member opposite would say that it looks, now, that any kind of political play with the Future Fund, we think, in this bill, that we've eliminated it.

After 10 years, you could have had extraordinary circumstances. There could have been circumstances that you saw, as a Cabinet, fit that you were going to use this money for the Future Fund to pay for some worthy initiative. While we need always to make sure that we fund worthy initiatives, we're saying not from the Future Fund. Pay on our debt, and any worthy initiative, it will show up in the budget that we've got and we debate in the House of Assembly.

One thing I would say to the hon. Member, the Premier was insistent that we have affordability measures and, in Question Period, you really can't address the affordability measures. So I had stated that \$226 million that we've addressed out is called affordability measures. But keep in mind that we have, in most of rural Newfoundland, seniors who want to stay in their own homes.

I'm sure the Members opposite – the Member for Burin - Grand Bank will know this well. We know that they would access under the Provincial Home Repair Program the \$5,000 non-repayable grant. That's well used under the Provincial Home Repair Program. I know it is in the District of Bonavista. How many times a need comes up where they would say, well, I've got my grant used up and I can't get another grant for seven years. Well, this budget doubles that grant from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** From \$5,000 to \$10,000. The Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being, he's put it out in his department.

Now, that is good. So that is a \$4.2-million addition to our budget that we've got this year. Annualize next year, it's in the budget next year, which you know that the deficit is up a little further, then we know that that is going to cost \$7.2 million because it's going to be a full year as opposed to half of this year. It's annualized next year to \$7.2 million.

The maximum lifetime funding, I say to the hon. Member, was \$12,500. Again, this is more usage in rural than it would be in urban. But people in urban can access it. We're moving the lifetime amount from \$12,500 to – if you don't know, it means we didn't do a good job of telling you that this is in the budget, and maybe it came up at Estimates but not everyone was there. We're moving from \$12,500, effective at budget when passed, to \$30,000 – \$30,000 lifetime for seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador to be able to do renovations with their house in order that they can stay there and they'll have other money to address affordability issues that they would be experiencing, and we're proud of that measure.

The Home Modification Program, where we had seniors that might need some aides in their house – and the Minister of SSWB will certainly attest to this – on that component, we're going to increase from \$7,500 to \$15,000 when this budget passes.

In my district, we had trouble accessing an occupational therapist. We had to wait months to get those aides in homes because of the occupational therapist. We can say right now that the need to have an occupational therapist visit the home of these low-income seniors has been taken out. That means if you've got a house and a low income, you don't need an occupational therapist to come in to validate, then it's probably a good thing on our red tape reduction as well.

Anyway, those are some measures that we have and, again, 90 per cent of the utilization of this program is outside the metro area. It's pretty well a rural component that helps people out in rural Newfoundland.

The hon. Member, I'm not sure if I addressed a question somewhere in that nine-minute-and-35-second reply. If not, you can gladly ask it again.

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Chair.

It reminds me of Mr. Miyagi: Wax on, wax off. We're talking about the regulations for Bill 9, I think it is. But I am glad the Finance Minister – thank you very much, Sir, for tying all of the expenditures for affordability to the \$186 million that was taken out of the Future Fund or diverted from the Future Fund this year, which is interesting.

But I will agree with the Finance Minister on what he said, at least part of what he said, with respect to the political decision point. I believe the Future Fund, when it was created, wasn't created with political intention. I believe that what you're trying to accomplish with the Future Fund here today is not fraught with political intention, but the fact that it's happening and it's not being followed the letter of the law in this calendar year is political.

I don't mean political as in in PC, Liberal, NDP. I don't mean that. I just mean it's a political decision, meaning a decision of government to decide not to pay what is legally required to pay, as of today, \$182 million to \$186 million – I'll take your numbers – to this act. That is legally what this House has to pay to the Future Fund, so we are not paying that and we're delaying paying of that because this legislation is on the books to deal with.

So I will agree with you that I don't believe that the future of the Future Fund is political in nature. I think some of the changes you made, albeit that some of my colleagues may not necessarily agree with some of those, I can see some understanding of why you would do that. I think that's where the commonality ends on that side.

You've mentioned a couple of times, in your responses to different individuals, maybe even to me once before or maybe three or four times before I done this, about credit

cards and talking about families and credit cards. I think that we've got to be clear to the general public about what we're actually talking about here. We're not talking about credit card debt. We're talking about very low interest rates to borrow money.

Before anyone goes and says that you should never borrow money, I agree. Governments, in particular Newfoundland and Labrador, since 1949, has borrowed a significant amount of money in the markets. We're paying a low interest rate of, I think, the minister's own words, worth 3.7 per cent this past year and I think the year before, he said, as well – 3.7 per cent was the interest rate for borrowing.

What we're getting in the market – the same market that we're talking about – we're lending that money, again, out and we're getting 7.8 per cent-ish – between 7.5 and 7.8. I won't hold the minister to what he said, but I think he said both of those numbers over the last couple of weeks. It's over 7 per cent. So we'll be safe in saying that.

Just so the general public and all the people that are listening from the beautiful District of Bonavista and the historic District of Virginia Waters - Pleasantville that there's a significant amount of money being made on the money that we're borrowing. So we can't use the borrowing side as a negative as we're talking about here.

Now we can make choices to say that we're going to borrow the money to put it into sinking fund, which I think the Finance Minister said a slightly better rate, but you can do both of these. Like, you can walk and chew gum at the same time, and I think those are important distinctions.

It's hard for me to untie the \$186 million that is being diverted from the Future Fund by law that has to go in, in this fiscal year – because the House of Assembly, and I said many times, is a time machine. We can change a piece of legislation that allows the

government the flexibility not to borrow \$186 million or \$182 million, somewhere in that range.

That allows you, then, to use the exact same pot of money that you were talking about earlier, about the sugar tax, where the money went in for sugar tax. You said it goes to the general revenue. That's essentially where one pot of money in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador sits. If you don't have to borrow money to put into the Future Fund, that allows you the ability to have money, if you have to borrow money in the future, this year, to utilize that for your affordability measures.

That's where we sit on that. I will also agree with the comments from October of 2022 with the current Minister of Mines and Energy, the MHA for Terra Nova. We haven't agreed on much in the last couple of weeks, but I can agree with him on his October of 2022 comments, saying that he thinks mining royalties should also be put into the Future Fund. I wish that he would be pushing for that same thing now in the future in this administration that he has.

You mentioned earlier about Crown assets that would go in. You mentioned it, so I'm just bringing it up as – there's nothing on the horizon that you've said that would be put in place for the Crown assets, which is a good thing. I know that you've said that you are not planning on taking any money out of the Future Fund, which is good.

We did uncover that there is a deferral or a direct diverting \$186 million of less that you would not borrow to that, so that's a little bit there. I think, using your own words, Minister, we're at \$533 million in the fund right now, thereabouts. You said, in five years, it would be \$629.8 million. In 10 years, it will be \$867.5 million. In 20 years, it will be \$1.4 billion, provided – that's using your words – a conservative interest rate. Not mine. Any time I say "conservative" in this House, usually someone on the other side says it's Progressive Conservative. But

this is actually a conservative interest rate that you're looking at.

I would just like to let your mind go here for the last minute, and just think about where that \$1.4 billion, in 20 years from now, when I'm 66 years old, that number would be far greater than \$1.4 billion, even if we had put a modest 2 per cent without escalation into the Future Fund.

Thank you very much for the time.

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

**C. PARDY:** I think that's a wonderful conversation. I do want to state I'm not comfortable with the word "divert." Just let me mention, you made it sound like \$226 million we roll out in affordability measures that we've made the political decision that we're going to not borrow \$186 million in order to pay for the \$226 million of affordability issues that we rolled out, or 80 per cent of what we had in our platform.

In Question Period yesterday – that was yesterday or – you asked me to let my mind go, but it's gone. I think it was yesterday the Leader of the Opposition stood and I had stated that fact that there was half a billion dollars of programs out there that were not funded in '26-'27. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition stood and said, well, you took \$110 million of Liberal initiatives and you brought forward, i.e., the gas tax permanent reduction.

But I've stated to the House, and I state to the viewers in Newfoundland and Labrador, the funding for the permanent reduction for the provincial gas tax was not in the budget for '26-'27. I understand what you're trying to picture, the frame you're putting out there to say \$186 million we've diverted from the Future Fund into what we're paying, but remember, you left us with half a billion dollars that we had to fund in this coming budget.

Now you would often say it took us a long time to get the budget to the floor. I would say that we had a lot of work to try to navigate around what we keep. We are going to keep the permanent reduction. We had to find that money to put into the budget. So when I say divert and you're saying divert when you look at the \$226 million we put in, if we diverted from anything, it was the half a billion dollars plus that you left us holding the bag that a lot of valued programs that we would have, we would need to fund.

I would say it almost seemed like you were waiting to go back in and you certainly had a lot of things that you were going to have to deal with when you got back in, or you were counting on an MOU being signed, that revenue would come in. But, keep in mind, the Leader of the Opposition stood in this House and said if you only had that MOU signed, we would be in a cash surplus this year, next year, the year after and the year after that. Well, that is incorrect – that is incorrect. No, we would not. If we had the oil revenues where they are now and they continued, yes, we could very well be there. But that alone, no, we would not. Not without the big spike in oil, we wouldn't get there.

So the decision the Member says, imagine for our future, let's pay into the Future Fund. He says our future generations will look at that and say, when he turns 66, boy, look at the fund that's in the Future Fund. Boy, if your debt ever continued to grow, which is what it did the 10 years you were in power, and that continued, while you had over \$2 billion in the Future Fund, I would say you'll be staring down \$26 billion in debt.

I don't know what the projection would be, but that's the path where it was going. You can't extrapolate paying into a Future Fund and say, boy, we're underserving the future without looking at the vast amount of debt that you're going to levy on future generations.

The Member for Corner Brook, if he had grandchildren, I'm sure they're worried about where – no grandchildren?

**J. PARSONS:** Not yet.

**C. PARDY:** Oh, same here.

Anyway, those with grandchildren in the House can look – our goal got to be to get that debt down. Save money, like you said, but get that debt down that we're not saddling future generations with an outlandish debt.

Anyway, he talks about the interest rate. We're cycled back to the interest rate again on what was borrowed for to what we made. The interest rate may not be as volatile as the oil revenue or the price of oil, but most would say it's volatile as well.

Credit cards – I would say to the viewers, and you made a message directly to those watching, that it's not really a credit card. It's not an interest. Well, if you're paying \$1.1 billion to \$1.2 billion to carry debt, call it what you want, if that's what you pay each year, it is a massive undertaking that we've got to face when 10 per cent of our revenues are going to that \$1.1 billion or \$1.2 billion yearly, we say that's too much. We're going to make sure that we take strides to turn that around and, hopefully, never again in the future, I say, you saddle us with a whole lot of debt and deficit, because we are government. The onus on us now is to make sure we deal with it, and we've got to be accountable to deal with what we've got left.

This is one small measure that we're doing. So if we had \$2 billion in debt that had no sinking fund in 2047, that you pushed out, with no sinking fund – if we had another \$2 billion in 2051, if we got in a cash surplus position, I would dearly love to be able to anchor sinking funds to those amounts, \$2-billion debentures that are going to come due for some government in the future.

I don't think we'll be in in 2047 but whatever government is in – you might be back in government at that time. When you're back in government in 2047 and that debt comes due, I'd like for you to give us credit to say, boy, when that \$2 billion is paid for and comes due and you're operating for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador with no deficit there because you haven't got to borrow, I would like for you to give credit to this Progressive Conservative government who added sinking funds to the debt you pushed out without them.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** With the Chair's permission, I'd just like to take a little side note. I gave the answer to a question one time that the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, and I used the word bigly. You might have recalled it. Do you recall that word that time?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** We recall that.

**C. PARDY:** You recall that? Yeah, I used the word bigly in Terrenceville, but I want to qualify that.

People in Terrenceville don't use the word bigly but I know it sounds likes that. We have very good friends in Terrenceville that we had, lifetime friends from university on, the Rideout's and the Hickey's. We spent a lot of time down there; vice versa, they spent a lot of time at our place. We went down there to be a community gathering, mostly Rideout's and Hickey's and friends.

I remember one time when the president of the United States got elected and we had fun at his expense one night in Terrenceville.

In Terrenceville, in that gathering that we had in that home, sipping tea and debating about things that were going on around us, the only one we ever knew used the word bigly was the president of the United States. We had a real mock-up of the president of

the United States that night and we had fun at his expense.

So the wording in Question Period when I said the people from Terrenceville, we had fun that night with his use of the word bigly, and that's what I referred in that context.

Nobody reached out to me. The only one that reached out to my wife was our good friend, Bernetta Hickey, from Terrenceville; her husband, Tom Rideout, they reached out on the word bigly.

Anyway, with 23 seconds left, I want to clear the air with that. I love the people like you do, Chair, the people of Terrenceville. They do not use the word bigly, but we had a good laugh one night.

I hope this don't make the American network – the Minister of Finance in the oil-rich Province of Newfoundland and Labrador did have a time where we were mocking the president of the United States.

Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** No problem.

Just on behalf of the people of Terrenceville, in my district, I appreciate the commentary from the minister.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It wasn't relevant. I don't know why you didn't call him.

**CHAIR:** Well he asked for leave on it, so I let it go.

The Chair recognizes the Member from the great District of Corner Brook.

**J. PARSONS:** Now that's the way you get an introduction. What a Member, I'll tell you now.

So we've had a bit of discussion, a bit of back and forth, and I know that there's some talk about language. But, again, removing this requirement to contribute, I

know that the minister doesn't like to say "divert" the money but if it is the law of the land and we're not doing it, I would say it's a diversion. I know it's included in the budget to not include the money, but this bill hasn't passed yet so it is presumptuous, right now, until it is passed. I still have faith. I still have faith that you'll see the light. That's absolutely right.

So we'll make our argument one more time, at least, to do this, that we're only going to do deposits in a surplus position. That's going to be a ways.

Now, I will refer back to our book club and I will refer the minister to chapter 5, choice architecture from *Nudge* by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, but it talks about the power of defaults.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** This is relevant.

**J. PARSONS:** Yes.

So the power of defaults, the idea is that when you set something by default, people are more likely to do it. If it's a retirement savings plan that's part of your employment, people will do it just be default. By setting this in legislation or in regulation, this is what we're going to do with a certain amount of our oil or our non-renewable royalties, we're setting that as a default. It's what we do without intervention and it is very important.

Now, I think that we've used this analogy a few times, talking about our own ability to pay down debt and invest for the future in our households. I'm going to use pat your head and rub your stomach instead of walk and chew bubble gum.

First of all, I want to talk about the reason why we invest while we pay down debt. We talked about the time frame and I'm not sure where I'll be in – what was it – 2047. But I can tell you that if we kept contributing and assuming oil royalty revenues were similar – we won't get into inflation here – but

assuming the \$186 million that we would get based on that escalating formula, for comparison, in 25 years without contributing, our Future Fund will be \$1.8 billion. But if we did keep contributing to the Future Fund, it'll be \$10.7 billion. Okay? That's just 25 years. Speaker, 25 years, as most of us know, is a blink. Think about when our kids were young. So it is super important that we do that investment early in our provincial life, and we're still, I think, in our early life.

I'll also mention chapter 6 for the minister's benefit, which is about save more tomorrow. It mentions tax deductible and tax deferred retirement savings programs. Now, of course, everyone is familiar; we just finished tax time. We get a tax credit for contributing to our RRSP. We defer our tax payments by doing that. We are incentivized in our tax code to contribute early to retirement savings. In fact, in some ways you could consider almost punished to not do that, to take it out.

So there is a cost to borrow when we're not in surplus. I agree with that. But, again, as my colleagues have mentioned and I think that the minister mentioned, that number is currently around 3.76 per cent.

Now, in personal finance, there is something called the 6 per cent rule, which is a rule of thumb which suggests that if the interest rate on debt is higher than 6 per cent, pay down debt first, right, and don't invest.

Now, we are in a position where now, our investments, the profitability and the long-term benefit of having these investments, outweighs paying on that 3.76 per cent debt. I don't know that it's possible to argue that.

So I appreciate the idea of paying down debt, but it isn't a credit card. We're not talking about an 18 per cent credit card here. I know that the debt has come down in terms of the rates we're paying, the interest

rates. I would assume that we have smart people in Finance that is, again, refinancing that debt as it is possible and we'll continue to do that.

One thing that we've talked about – and this word has come about before – is the slush fund. I think the minister brought it up a bit earlier. Now, first of all, I would dare – and I'll ask him to comment on this, but I'm pretty sure that we would all agree that the Future Fund, in its current life, is not a slush fund. The dictionary talks about the slush fund as a fund for bribing officials or an unregulated fund for illicit purposes.

This is clearly regulated very highly. In fact, it's very regulated in how much we have to put in it, how we take things out of it. It's really, again, an investment in the future, and I think the minister will agree to that. He's a reasonable person.

I think that the language we've used around this and the idea of paying a credit card and things like that, we poison people against the idea that we should be taking a little small bit of our revenue from these royalties and putting it away for the future.

I point out, as well, that what we're talking about right now specifically is the regulation around the rates for contributing our royalties and it starts, of course, at 2 per cent for the first \$250 million and it goes up to 5 per cent, 10 per cent, 15 per cent, 25 per cent and so on. I would imagine that the reason why there is that escalating amount is in an attempt to live at the boom-bust cycle that economies that are using non-renewables often face.

So that will help us instill some discipline in how we spend, instead of using it for the Future Fund, we're going to use it for programs. Instead of figuring our new innovative ways to limit our spending, we'll be less inclined to do so and by not having that money on hand, it would inspire some innovation in our economic development so

that that non-renewable money, that easy money, just isn't there to spend.

The idea that we're going to stop these mandatory contributions to the Future Fund makes this revenue so flexible, it could be used for anything that's politically expedient, right now. I won't call it a slush fund, but it is, now, much easier to use this fund – whether you call it diverted or what – in something other than putting it away for the future. It will not instill the discipline, I think, that we need.

I really hope that the minister and his colleagues will reconsider this. Even a measure to put a little bit away, just to save a little bit of this money would do wonders in the future. 2047, I would suggest, that maybe the other side will be thanking this side for that move.

I'll leave it there but, again, I'll hope that the minister will reconsider this and consider this a gift to ourselves in 25, 30, 50 years from now.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** Seeing no more speakers, shall clause 6 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 6 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 Future Fund Act. (Bill 9)

**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 with amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Without amendment.

**CHAIR:** We done an amendment in clause 4. The amendment is passed.

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill with amendment, carried.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Future Fund Act, with amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** 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 and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

**J. DWYER:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 9 with amendment.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends Bill 9 with amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**L. PARROTT:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

**L. PARROTT:** Presently.

**SPEAKER:** Presently.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. PARROTT:** Speaker, I move, seconded by The Minister of Finance and President of

Treasury Board, that the amendment now be read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It's been moved and seconded that the amendment be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

**CLERK:** First reading of the amendment.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. PARROTT:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the amendment now be read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that the amendment be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

**CLERK:** Second reading of the amendment.

On motion, amendment read a first and second time.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Speaker.

Order 2, Bill 4.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board that Bill 4, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, be now read a third time.

**SPEAKER:** Bill 9, isn't it?

**L. PARROTT:** Wrong Orders of the Day. Sorry, Speaker. I apologize.

Order 2, Bill 9.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board that Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Future Fund Act, be now read a third time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said 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.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**SPEAKER:** Division has been called.

I summon in all the Members.

### Division

**SPEAKER (Lane):** Are the House Leaders ready?

All those in favour –

**CLERK:** The independent Member is not here, so you need to ring the bells.

**SPEAKER:** Okay, sorry.

The independent Member is not in the Chamber so we have to ring the bells for, I think, 10 minutes is the procedure. It's 10 minutes or until he comes.

Are the House Leaders ready?

All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

**TABLE OFFICER (Hammond):** Tony Wakeham, Lloyd Parrott, Joedy Wall, Lela Evans, Helen Conway Ottenheimer, Paul Dinn, Craig Pardy, Barry Petten, Jeff Dwyer, Loyola O'Driscoll, Andrea Barbour, Chris Tibbs, Lin Paddock, Pleaman Forsey, Mike Goosney, Keith Russell, Riley Balsom, Hal Cormier, Mark Butt, Jim McKenna, Joseph Power, Eddie Joyce.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, please rise.

**TABLE OFFICER:** John Hogan, Lisa Dempster, Bernard Davis, Sarah Stoodley, Pam Parsons, Keith White, Paul Pike, Elvis Loveless, Fred Hutton, Jamie Korab, Lucy Stoyles, Jim Parsons, Bettina Ford, Michael King, James Dinn, Sheilagh O'Leary.

Speaker, the ayes: 22; the nays: 16.

**SPEAKER:** The motion has been carried.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Future Fund Act. (Bill 9)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Future Fund Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 9)

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. STOYLES:** Thank you, Speaker.

As always, I'm compassionate about my district. I'm always delighted to get up and talk about the beautiful District of Mount Pearl North and all of Mount Pearl because Mount Pearl is a community that's made up of two districts. Even though I only represent Mount Pearl North, I always get calls from people in both districts and I'm very happy to help anybody that calls, if they're from Mount Pearl or if they're from the Member opposite's district. I've often helped a number of people in the district but, today, I stand to speak about the budget and about the cuts to the City of Mount Pearl and the municipal Multi-Year Capital Works.

My understanding, Speaker, the City of Mount Pearl – and I've received a list actually late last night. I found out last night I was going to be in budget today and in Estimates today. While we were in Estimates, last night, I was given a copy of the Multi-Year Capital Works and, I guess, the understanding given to us is what towns and municipalities was going to be given multi year.

I understand that the government of today is going to be making changes to that multi-year program and that the seven largest municipalities is given their allotment over the next four years and it's over four years instead of three years. I understand a lot of the municipalities were not really very happy with it. When the Premier campaigned on transparency and accountability, according to the municipalities, they didn't have the opportunity to have meaningful engagement

with Municipalities Newfoundland and with municipalities in general.

Over 50 per cent of municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador are going to be affected by these changes. And, no doubt, my District of Mount Pearl North and all of Mount Pearl is going to be affected by the changes, especially in Mount Pearl where they're going to be cut \$1.2 million.

In my district alone in Mount Pearl North, my district is one of the oldest parts – the infrastructure is aging and this is going to be very difficult to continue with getting the infrastructure in place, especially in the district where it's aging.

The City of Mount Pearl, I've served on council for over 25 years and we've always managed our money very well. We were considered to be one of the richest municipalities in Newfoundland. We worked hard to manage our money.

We only ask for a tax increase when we need it to bring up our budget. We always said and the council of John Walsh would always say – and he brought the budget in several times; I brought it in only once – we only take what we need. If we don't need to raise taxes, we won't. We're only going to take what we need. The City of Mount Pearl managed their money very well. It seems like now we're going to be punished for managing our money well. I hope that's not the case.

I asked the minister of the day if he would consider meeting with the City of Mount Pearl to talk about being transparent, and I'm sure the council of the day would be only delighted to meet with the minister and have meaningful explanations why the City of Mount Pearl is going to be cut so much.

I want to talk a little bit about Mount Pearl and the growth of Mount Pearl. I've lived in Mount Pearl for 55 years. I've seen Mount Pearl grow. The Mount Pearl sporting groups, I mean, hockey and soccer got the

largest groups in this province. Soccer got almost 2,000 children enrolled in their program. The Mount Pearl Blades, I just attended, on Sunday, three different banquets, and 51 years they have been established in the City of Mount Pearl.

So not only have they helped and worked with Mount Pearl, all kinds of children from all over the region, in St. John's, in Southlands and in Paradise, have come to Mount Pearl, they go to school in Mount Pearl and they benefit from all the work that Mount Pearl has done over the past 50 years.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** And swimming, too.

**L. STOYLES:** All the sports groups. We started the Mount Pearl Sports Alliance. First when I got on council, the Sports Alliance was the first organization to get started, and they built Mount Pearl sporting as the capital of Newfoundland. When you talk about the capital of tourism, well, sports has been the capital of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Mount Pearl Seniors Independence started about 28 years ago. I was on that board. I was one of the first ones to help when they got started. Now the doors are overcrowded. They have over 700 members. They had to stop taking members from outside of Mount Pearl because they had so many members in their group.

They even started a second group just a couple of years ago. They had their first anniversary. This is going into their second year. They call themselves the 50 Plus Group and they have over 300 members. They're active. They do activities every single day. The Mount Pearl Seniors Independence is highlighted around the province. People come into Mount Pearl to learn and find out what Mount Pearl have done because they've been so successful.

We have the best walking trails in the province. We have the business park in

Donovans and businesses come from all over Canada and start businesses in Mount Pearl because it's a good place to live and do business. The Mount Pearl Chamber of Commerce have been very, very successful. They joined with Paradise and now they're the Mount Pearl-Paradise Chamber of Commerce.

It goes on and on and on. They have been a leading force with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and I know back, shortly after I got on council, Mayor Randy Simms ran and was president of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. I served on Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, Speaker, for 11 years and was Avalon director. I was one of the people who started doing all the districts' meetings around the province and on the Avalon having meetings with all the joint councils, the Northeast Avalon Joint Council. We worked with them and worked very closely with all municipalities around. Municipalities looked at Mount Pearl as a leader and they used Mount Pearl as the example, for years, to talk about what a community was like and how important it was to build strong communities.

I'm saddened today to stand here and talk about Mount Pearl losing \$1.2 million in our budget. We're in the process now of opening up a new community centre. We have the soccer fields that had the first artificial turf in Newfoundland, and they're actually in the process of putting a second turf in on the same field next door.

So we've worked very, very hard in Mount Pearl. I know when I leave here today, council is in session in Mount Pearl, I'm going to be stopping and chatting with council today, because I don't even know if they know that this money has been cut. I found out last night and I was absolutely shocked to hear this.

The other thing I want to talk about this afternoon is when we were in Question Period today, we talked about a lady in

health, waiting for surgery, a lady with a locked jaw and a lady who has been suffering for months waiting to have surgery. I cannot sit back in my seat this afternoon without mentioning her. Actually, I received an email from her after Question Period today. She said: I appreciate you bringing it forward.

But bringing it forward is not going to get her the emergency surgery that she needs. So I'm begging the government of the day to do something for this woman. She has lost pretty much 100 pounds. She has a child with a disability. Who is going to look after her child if she's gone? Like, this woman needs help and I'm asking the government to consider looking at helping this woman.

She is in desperate need of health care. I don't want to have to call that woman up when I go home this evening and tell her to sue the government, because how long is that going to take her? She would be in her grave before it goes to court with our court system.

Anyway, thank you, Speaker, for your time.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

It's been a while since I got up on any debate, so it's all right to stand for a second. I guess I had to stand and respond to the Member for Mount Pearl North, some of her commentary, and I'll probably just provide some clarity more than anything.

When I took over the department in late October, I always knew there was a problem with the Municipal Capital Works program, as being an MHA. I could never get answers, but I always knew there was an imbalance. I heard it from municipalities.

I heard it from my own municipality, but I always knew there was an imbalance but I could never get any clarity.

Upon taking over the role, I asked for a thorough analysis. Give me everything that's there. Explain the program to me, why we do this and what is included and what is what. When I was given that full and thorough analysis, it was pretty startling. I knew then we had a problem.

When I say we have a problem, I could have carried on and done what was left in place and then, next year, carried on and done the same thing again, keep repeating. When I analyzed it, I realized, in fairness, if the AG were to come in and tackle the flaws within that program, I would be in front of a microphone somewhere in this building explaining this AG's report and why I didn't do anything to fix it.

So I am the type of person, when I see a problem, I try to fix it, if I have the ability to fix it; or if I don't have the ability to fix it, I advocate for it to be fixed. I spent 10 years on the other side of this House doing exactly that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** *Hansard* will show that I stood in my place time after time again, no matter what the issue or how tangly the issue was or complicated it was, I stood in my place and argued. I didn't win every battle, but I do take a lot of pride in the fact that I'm a very passionate advocate for whatever I believe in.

On this flip side now, in the role I'm into now, it's a different role but I have that obligation to the public, to my constituents and the people of this province and to the Premier of the province and this government to do what's right, too.

So when I took over the department, the Municipal Capital Works was in a mess. Officials wanted it cleaned up. They were

never given that ability to be able to do so. I empowered them to tell them, come back to me and offer solutions. I want it more streamlined. I wanted policies in place. I wanted formulas. You're giving out all this money and there was no formula. So you had a Multi-Year Capital Works program that was always entailed with the seven large municipalities and all the remaining other municipalities would go into the Municipal Capital Works program and you could apply year over year.

When I looked at it, there was 22 put in the Multi-Year Capital Works – 22. So when I asked why there are 22, no one could explain. They were just put there. There was one municipality – I won't say the name of the municipality, but they only had 1,600 people. This is supposed to be for the seven largest municipalities in the province. They rightfully should have and would have been better off to stay in the Municipal Capital Works program.

Then I'm told, if you're in the Multi-Year Capital Works program, you can't go into the Municipal Capital Works program. Lo and behold, we had municipalities getting in both. They were getting multi-year and they were getting Municipal Capital Works.

When I came to that realization, I said we've got a problem. I want it fixed and it's got to be fixed this year. So we tried to communicate. We tried to get the message out there. I met with towns. Did I reach everyone? Obviously not. I mean, the number of municipalities in the province, it's virtually impossible.

But before I get into explaining more to the Member for Mount Pearl North's concerns, and it's a fair point actually, MNL have been very outspoken that they never got consulted – and that's disappointing; it's unfortunate. But I met with MNL and I told them in the meeting that we had a problem and I was going to try to review and reform the Municipal Capital Works program, which we're doing.

Also, our senior staff met with them before the budget to explain to them some of the changes. Included in that, ironically, MNL have written a letter and in that letter they've addressed a lot of concerns. Now, the letter was wrote to me, but it's going to be copied to the Premier and the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. All these concerns they're listing in their letter, I'm working on those things. We just haven't got it figured out yet.

We have a committee in place, which staff are on it, led by the Infrastructure Division. They're trying to find solutions to all these concerns. We've got a problem with small municipalities in the province having the ability to be able to carry out this work, having the ability to do the proper engineering, having the ability to do the proper consulting work, to get it out to tender. They are struggling. Small municipalities struggle. I'm the first to agree to it, and it's something that I've acknowledged.

I'm willing to help those municipalities. We have to find a way. We've got a situation where we've got duplication of services, where we're forcing a small municipality to do something and then we're coming in and reviewing the work. We have to find a better way. Do we take over from them? Maybe that's what we do. We have to help the small municipalities. I'm willing to do that.

Back to the Municipal Capital Works program, so people understand, I actually put more money in the Municipal Capital Works portion. Right now, we've doubled the money in the Municipal Capital Works that they can apply for year over year. The seven municipalities that were taken out of the 22 for the Multi-Year Capital Works, they historically spent \$7 million to \$7.5 million in projects. So with them, moving back to the Municipal Capital Works – actually with them, went to \$10 million. Not \$7.5 million that they always used, \$10 million. So that's increased.

To the Member opposite's point about Mount Pearl, that was an unfortunate calculation because what staff came back with, they came back with variations. It was all calculation-driven, formula-driven based on the 10,000 or more people in your community or your town or your district, or your city in this case. But it's done on a formula basis.

So the final number was \$233, maybe in change, per person. When that factored in, the biggest increase went to the Town of Paradise, I believe. The biggest decrease – and there were several; there were two or three smaller ones – was Mount Pearl. That's unfortunate.

But I'll quantify that by saying if you're going to give a program to seven large municipalities, you have to have a rationale to why you got number one, number two, number three, number four, number five, number six, number seven. There has to be some rationale. You just don't open the purse and just start giving money to everyone.

The City of St. John's were always number one, and rightfully so, they're the largest municipality in the province. They're the capital city. We all understood that. But wouldn't you think, just for a second, number two – shouldn't number two be the second largest and number three be the third largest and number four be the fourth largest and number five be the fifth largest amount? To me, common sense prevails there that you would think that's the way it should be. That's the way it is now and it's the way it should be.

An unfortunate circumstance of that – there are municipalities that was number two, Mount Pearl being that number two, should never have been number two. They were number four in population. They should have fit into that slot. It was not about attacking Mount Pearl. I say to the Member opposite – she is looking – I spoke to the Speaker about this earlier. It's nothing to do

with Mount Pearl. I have a great relationship – I will meet with the City of Mount Pearl any day of the week and explain it.

I already met with them and quietly said I was making changes several months back. They were aware that there were changes was coming. This could have been CBS, my own district. When they fit out the numbers, this is what the numbers came out. I didn't like to have to do that but if you don't do that, you're going to go back to the drawing board and keep carrying on an issue, a problem. This is a problem.

Now, going forward, it's going to be done fairly. It's going to be fair and everyone is going to be treated the same because, ultimately, that's the idea behind this: Everyone should be treated equally.

So every person in each community or town, you're getting the same dollar per capita for the seven largest. I think that's the only fair way of doing it. There's no other way of picking it. There's not other way of doing it.

As for the Municipal Capital Works portion of that, those municipalities will do better. They will actually get more money. I know that seems to be a problem out there – I will try to address it, but it seems to be a problem out there, with people not understanding, and MNL being one of them. I will gladly sit down and explain to them as well. It's no attacks here. This is about getting a program right.

I'll go a step further. Staff in my department are happy that someone took the initiative to fix a program that was broken. I'm not going to say it was broken by the government opposite or the Opposition. This was broken for a long time. This goes back a long time. It got really, really bad in the last number of years but, whatever, that's fine. But it's never been done right. It was never done the way it should have been done.

That's where my personality and my part comes in that I can't let stuff die – a dog on a bone. I knew that was never right. It's not about politics here; it's about doing what was right. We'll have our time for politics, that's fine, but this is about doing what was right.

This case here was a case of, I did what I thought was in the best interest. Now, that could have been CBS got a decrease and I would have had to suck that up, too, and say to the mayor of my own community – and it could have been any other community. It just happened to be Mount Pearl.

I just want to make that clear. I'll address this further as time as time goes on, but I know that there's misinformation out there. Actually, some misinformation is coming from the actual Municipalities NL. Fair enough, and I'm willing to talk to them again, but they should have this information. I'm willing to explain it further, no problem. We will do whatever and I'll have officials do the same thing, but we need to make sure what information is being put out there is accurate and I trust you and you can trust me – no one can trust me, that's up to them.

What I'm telling you is as honest as I can be about this issue, but I do know and I've heard from others and I seen the mayor of Grand Falls on the news last night making reference to infrastructure. Before life gets to it and it gets any legs, people need to understand that it's not what it appears. If you're in this House and you're former council, you sat on any council – I know the Member for Mount Pearl North did – this is doing what's right. This is being fair to every resident in the province, including Mount Pearl and right across. It just happened that the program was never administered properly before.

Mount Pearl should not have been getting what they were getting and others be getting less, but that was a problem. I seen a problem, but no one wanted to address it.

I took it upon myself to address it. I'm happy I addressed it. We're going to work on other issues pertaining to the Multi-Year Capital Works and Municipal Capital Works, but a big problem is smaller municipalities.

The bigger, large towns have the capacity; smaller communities don't and we have to find a way to make it work for them, because this is not working. For small municipalities this is not working. We have to find a solution; staff are aware of that. They're working on it. They're willing to consult with the MNLs of the world and all municipalities out there. We're willing to have that consultation.

This issue is a very important one to me. Members on this side will know that I put a lot of energy into this because I felt that it was the right thing to do. Now that it's fixed, and we'll get the other kinks worked out, municipalities in general, this should be good news for them now as time goes on, year over year, and this problem should not come back again. If we don't make any changes, this formula can go on for a long time because you're basing it on per capita, and that's the fairest way of doing it. They made me make some tinkers, but this program, now, I think is the most transparent and it's the fairest to everyone out there. I stand by that.

We will do further changes, further improvements and we will consult with whoever we need to consult with. If the City of Mount Pearl wants to meet with me, I have no issue. If MNL wants to meet with me again, I have no issue. I'll meet with whoever wants to meet with me.

I just want to provide clarity because I think there is some misinformation out there about how this all came to be. It's not remotely close to being political; it's per capita and, no matter what town or city in the province, if you're over 10,000 people, it's based on \$233 per person, bar none. No matter what your population is, that's how it's based.

Anyway, I wanted to clarify that.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**P. PIKE:** Thank you, Speaker.

It's always an honour to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the people of Burin - Grand Bank; great people and a great place to live.

Speaker, before I start, I'd just like to say that I've been a Member of the House of Assembly now, an MHA, for five years. It's been a wonderful five years, I have to say – a great five years. I look forward to many more, even though my age might catch up with me at some point.

In those five years, I've made many friends on both sides of the House, and good friends, friends that I'll always cherish and, hopefully, as I move on at some point, we can be friends, as well, outside the House. But today is probably the worst day I've ever had in my political career, because I was labelled, like my other colleagues, a fool. I'm certainly no fool, nor are my colleagues fools, nor are there any fools on that side of the House over there – none. You're all decent people who are elected by your constituents. You're lucky to be one of 40 people in the province that represent people, and you deserve to be treated with respect.

Certainly, like I say, this has been a bad day for me and my colleagues, as well. We don't deserve that; nobody deserves that, and I'll be expecting an apology and so will my colleagues. None of us deserve it.

Today, I'd certainly like to talk about the budget, as well. In my area I think, probably, the top priority would be health care. Health care remains –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I'm finding it difficult to hear the hon. Member. If you're having conversations, you can take them outside.

Thank you.

**P. PIKE:** Health care remains the largest area of spending in our budget, and rightly so. It should; we have an aging population. As a matter of fact, we have 25 per cent of our population that are 65 years old and older.

People in my district are not that worried about how money is spent, how money is saved, how much interest we're paying; I think what they really want is they want to be able to get a doctor. They want emergency rooms to stay open and whether seniors can access long-term care close to home or in their own homes.

Speaker, if you're from rural Newfoundland, you certainly realize that recruitment is an issue. People would much rather live in the urban areas, and it's very hard to attract doctors and nurses to rural areas. When I was mayor, I remember meeting with young doctors who were graduating and talking about things that the town could do to make you more welcome: offer you a key to the town, invitations to all events, do what we could to pay for your golf fees at the closest golf course and so on, just trying to attract people – pay no taxes. Still, it didn't work. It's very hard to recruit doctors. It's very difficult.

People in rural Newfoundland as well, we have to travel for specialized care. We've got to travel long distances for specialized care. There are no specialists that travel to the Burin Peninsula, or very few. I don't think there are any now. What we did have coming do not show up anymore. They don't come anymore. That's really sad. That's really something that we've really got

to work on, and I ask the minister, and I'm sure the minister is listening, if she would look at that and try to bring more specialists to rural areas of the province. We know they're not going to come there to live, but they may come there for periods of time so our people don't have to travel.

Speaker, rural Newfoundland also has an aging population. Our population is growing. I was in a community a couple of weeks ago to a meeting that I was called to – as a matter of fact, it was in one of the towns in my community that I've done a petition on the roads for. I went to the town meeting and there was about 50 people there. There was only 70 in the town. All of them – not a few of them – were seniors and they need help. They need to be able to get to their hospital appointments and so on. There's no nurse practitioner or nothing in the area – nobody. We need to take this into account when we look at budgeting. The people of the Burin - Grand Bank area deserve reliable, accessible and dependable health care.

I'm going to go community by community. I have four hospitals or four facilities in my area. We have the Grand Bank hospital, the St. Lawrence hospital, Burin and Baine Harbour – that area, there's a hospital – and Placentia West.

St. Lawrence – I live in that community and I can tell you first-hand, in the last few years, we haven't had good health care. We seem to be always moving people around. I don't know who makes those big decisions. When you take people from our hospital and move them to another hospital, it creates a void in that hospital that they're leaving.

I was talking to people last weekend, when I was in St. Lawrence, and the last thing that happened is we had a public health nurse. Now, this public health nurse serviced from Point May to St. Lawrence – or Little St. Lawrence. It's a huge catchment area. We had that person full-time in the hospital in

St. Lawrence where most people in those areas go.

They took that unit and had the person that was filling it go half time – a half-time public health nurse for that catchment area. People, especially our seniors, feel that. They don't know why that happened. Nobody in the medical profession on the Burin Peninsula understands why it happened, but it should never have happened. It should never.

I know a lot of seniors that rely on public health nurses. A lot of people that have small children and so on that rely on those services. It doesn't exist anymore. Why was it taken, just recently? Who's aware of that decision? Who knew about it? It's flawed. It was a flawed decision.

Lab X-ray – St. Lawrence, for example, is a 40-bed facility, long-term care, chronic care, protected care – 40 people actually in that hospital. The wait-list is through the roof of people trying to get in – through the roof. Now, this is something that we really need to get our heads around.

So we're going to take Lab X-ray out of there, make it half time. The service is gone for the peninsula, for that area. Why? Who made that decision?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**P. PIKE:** Within the last few months, yes, and that's the same thing with the public health as well, around Christmastime.

A 40-bed facility – we have people that are held in beds in Burin, carried there by ambulance – because, of course, the hospital in St. Lawrence lost this emergency clinic. So we have people that are in beds in Burin waiting to get into the long-term health care.

Our seniors – I met with a family a few weeks ago. I've been dealing with families in the last little while about having their

loved ones in Burin waiting to go to the long-term care facility. These loved ones spend 24-7 there with them. It's hard on families. Not only that – and you can check this out as well because I was told this – when they're in the hospital, they have to pay a daily fee. Can you imagine that? I think it's \$39 or \$59 a day. People don't have that – people don't have that.

I spoke to the minister a while ago, that we had a couple of nurses move to St. Lawrence, and their families. The whole town was elated with that. Two nurses from India moved to St. Lawrence – amazing. Between them, they had five children and those five children attended the school in St. Lawrence, which brought in an ESL teacher and upped the population of the school by five. Everybody in town adopted them, said we love having you here, and they loved being there. The kids – I met the children a while ago at a function. We love St. Lawrence. St. Lawrence is our home.

But do you know something? We're going to lose them. Do you why we're going to lose them? We don't have the place for them to stay. We don't have a place for them to live, so we're going to lose them. Now, there are houses in St. Lawrence that the hospital rents year-round, and sometimes they're vacant. They're held for doctors doing locums and nurse practitioners and so on.

But, right now, these two nurses have been told that they have to move out and their rent is going to go up, even if they do stay a little longer. That's an easy fix, and I know the minister knows about this and I'm sure she's actioned that. But I have to bring it up because it may happen in other areas.

There are no emergency services in St. Lawrence. I got an email here today from a gentleman in St. Lawrence. The doctor that he had left, so he went to emergency in St. Lawrence and they said no, you can't see a doctor or a nurse practitioner here, but you can do the Teladoc thing here.

He doesn't understand and I don't understand, but I am working with him. I emailed him back this morning and he just got back to me and said thanks so much and we appreciate your efforts and we need to do something about that. But we also lost emergency services in St. Lawrence. That didn't happen in the last little while. That has been a couple of years, we lost our emergency services.

But during the election, when I knocked on doors – listen, the PC candidate and the leader were here today knocking on my door, saying that we're going to fully staff St. Lawrence – fully staffed. Everybody was going, hey, what are you going to do? I said: Well, we do what we can. We're going to try our best. That's what I said: We're going to try our best. But no, you guys promised it. But it hasn't been delivered.

So these sorts of things are very important to people, especially our seniors. When the knock came on their door, that was music to their ears, let me tell you.

One of the other things, too, that was promised out there, that I met with as I was going around and I talked to people about, is when are we getting our MRI machine? We were promised an MRI machine. That was a great promise, but where did they go? One went to Labrador. One went to Grand Falls. Excellent. I'm so happy for the people, so happy. I'm not happy for the people in our area, but I am so happy for the people of Grand Falls and the people of Labrador.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Four (inaudible).

**P. PIKE:** Yes, there was a promise of four. Now, there are two, but two coming. What we want is we want ours as soon as possible because, once it's announced, it's going to be years before we get it.

**SPEAKER:** I would ask the Member to address the Chair, please.

**P. PIKE:** Yes, Speaker.

I'll get back to the MRIs. This letter I have here – I'm just going to reference it – came from the Burin Peninsula Health Care Foundation. The Member for Placentia West would know these people really well. They are one great group of individuals and their concern is that when we get the MRI machine, what can we do? How much money do you want us to raise to help there?

That's what they're doing – volunteers. That's what they want. How much can we raise now to help you with that? That's what this letter is all about. That's the kind of people that we want to deal with, isn't it? What can we do, Government, to speed this up? What can we do, Government, better? What can we do to help?

What they ask for is the planned location and installation timeline, the anticipated infrastructure staffing requirements that accompany the project and opportunity for collaboration and community support as this moves forward.

When I got that I was saying, what great people are out there, what wonderful people are out there. They're willing, they're waiting and they will be there, I can tell you. The Member for Placentia West will be going to, I think, one of their functions soon. We're both asked to be there and we will certainly be talking about the MRI and so on.

The thing I just want to end on is the – I've got lots here, by the way, but I think I've got three opportunities to get up. I just want to mention the RCMP detachment in Grand Bank, if I could. As you know, that was on TV and everything else. Everybody saw it. The promise was to open up the RCMP detachment in Grand Bank. When I heard that, I was a happy camper because I am all about the community policing model.

I'm thinking, if they're doing it in Grand Bank, in my district, hopefully that's a pilot

for the rest of the province then to get their detachments back up. That's the way I interpret it. I'm thinking that's going to be a wonderful thing for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's going to be great. Imagine, back to community policing.

I have a letter there, as well – I noticed that, today, I think it was sent to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety – from the people in Grand Bank wondering when that's going to happen. Wondering about the detachment, when that's going to be renovated and so on. It was a great thing that was done on the Burin Peninsula, but I would think that my colleagues right across this province and in the House here, I would think you're really excited about that announcement because what it means for my district, it should mean for all the districts. So we go back to that model which is a model we all loved because we had police living in our own communities.

I'm out of time. Sorry, but I'll be back.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

*Budget 2026* promises a plan for opportunity, a plan to build, a plan to improve health care, to make communities safer and a plan for people. The question is, does it deliver on those promises? Now, it's easy to be forgiving, to say it's this government's first budget. However, major issues and, in some cases, crises face us that demand bold action – action that were promised. In that light, *Budget 2026* is disappointing.

I'll start with housing and homelessness. We need much more deeply affordable, supportive, non-market, community-based housing. Why? Because it's a basic human right. No one should have to sleep in a tent,

call an emergency shelter home or use a hospital emergency room to keep warm.

It provides stability to an unhoused person struggling with mental health and addictions and is crucial to their recovery. It's cheaper and more effective than being housed in the correctional system. It actually reduces crime and makes communities safer. It takes the strain off our health care system and it increases housing capacity overall, making housing more affordable for everyone. I know the minister is committed to all these things.

It is not a choice to be homeless. A marriage fails, parents kick you out, a person loses a job, no one wakes up one morning and says I think I'll spend the rest of my life couch surfing, living in a tent or moving from shelter to shelter.

The young expectant mother of a young child who contacted my office last week because she's facing a whopping \$600-rent increase desperately seeks a more affordable option that's not there. A young woman undergoing chemotherapy would much rather have a place to call her own than couch surfing and living out of a backpack.

I still remember the 65-year-old I met over 20 years ago, renting a room in a house, cooking on a hot plate when I delivered him a food hamper. He had worked all his life and I'm certain he envisioned something much different for his so-called golden years.

I have been contacted by constituents regarding there are people living in their tents as recent as this week, Speaker. We think because there are no encampments on Confederation Hill or at the Colonial Building that the problem is solved. All we've accomplished was to move the problem into the shadows and make it less safe for housed and unhoused alike. As Maggie Helwig wrote: "But homelessness is,

more than anything else, a life of constant displacement.”

Talk to many people panhandling on the streets or in the shelters, you will quickly learn they had homes, families and careers. None of them planned or expected to be homeless. We fight for housing because there are probably many people only a paycheque or two away from a life of displacement.

We learned from the news that the lease for Horizons at 106 Airport Road is set to expire December 31, and it certainly caught End Homelessness by surprise. At the same time, the budget promises \$23 million for the emergency shelter system to correct for years of underfunding.

The Finance Minister noted in his speech that the province was left with an emergency shelter system bursting at the seams with an approximately 500 per cent increase in shelter use since 2018 – we know. An ATIPP last year revealed expenditures on emergency shelters increased from a little over \$4 million in 2019 to well over \$14 million in 2025. The answer is not to create more shelter spaces, as this measure seems to suggest. Most people use shelters because there is simply not enough affordable housing. This won't help the people at Horizons.

Now, the Minister of Housing assures us that his department will make sure that the 75 residents currently at Horizons will have homes and will not be placed in shelters. I know he means it and will work towards that. My question is, where are these houses?

I know, as does the minister, affordable housing is tight. Eight months is not a lot of time to find decent housing for people, many of whom have complex needs. What guarantees will be in place to ensure residents have the necessary supports, that they will not end up in the emergency housing shelters or back on the street?

What's the plan for workers? What is the plan if workers leave now to find other work?

Make no mistake, I do not support and did not support an expensive lease deal with political donors, but the approach is sound. We could have bought the property for much less and invested more into programming, or government could have invested in a facility like Dunn House, a social medicine and supportive housing project at the University Health Network in Toronto. I would have welcomed a plan in the budget to establish something similar.

I'll say it again: The answer to the housing crisis, Speaker, is to build more non-market, community-based housing; housing that is deeply affordable, supportive and stabilizing; that addresses underlying mental health and addictions; housing that will get people back on their feet. If we want safer communities, if we want to see less panhandling, fewer discarded needles, less crime, then we attack the underlying cause and house more people.

The budget attempts to address this by allocating \$31.1 million over three years to construct new social housing. That amounts to 41 units per year if we use a low-ball estimate of \$250,000 per unit. The minister said that the number will depend on the type of housing and, understandably, he could not provide a number. Either way, I would suggest it's not nearly enough houses.

Our party envisioned a more robust Housing Corporation. We proposed a separate Crown corporation that had the ability to raise its own funding and tackle affordable housing head-on. So why not give NLHC more autonomy to do what it needs to do? On a side note, let's invest in modular homes as well.

Anyway, the budget promises an investment of \$12.7 million over two years so that NLHC can hire 23 new maintenance and repair staff to repair the vacant and

uninhabitable homes. Any increase is welcome and is long overdue. Considering the number of NLHS homes in my district in need of renovation and repair, I do have to question if 23 is the right number.

While the corporation has received nine applications so far, not hires, there are underlying recruitment and retention issues. CUPE, the union representing these workers, also welcomes the investment but notes the budget fails to address the key issue holding those services back: low wages. Vacancies remain unfilled due to non-competitive pay. One union spokesperson said, without fixing wages, the plan doesn't work.

Speaker, *Budget 2026* also allocates an additional \$4 million per year to increasing the number of low-income households eligible for the Canada Housing Benefit. The wait-list for this benefit is 2,600. The additional funding will reduce the current wait-list by 20 per cent. Again, a start – a good start.

However, we are merely chasing the problem. We know, because when people came to us looking for a CHB at the end of last year, there were none available. They had all been allocated. Without an ambitious plan to build more affordable homes, this money will simply fall into the hands of private investors who seem to have a habit of raising rents to capture the increased subsidy.

*Budget 2026* also allocates \$10.5 million to Labrador West in application to the federal Build Canada initiative for construction of seniors' housing. On the surface, a positive step. Apart from the challenges referenced above, Labrador is constrained by the lack of available electrical power and without power – the power promised by the Churchill Falls agreement – expansion of the mining industry and the development of major housing projects will be severely hampered. While the budget allocates \$900,000 towards engineering for the

transmission line, without a transmission line, there is no power. Construction of a transmission line is a multi-billion-dollar project and a transmission line will be useless without power from Churchill Falls.

If, as the budget seems to suggest, increasing housing capacity is going to take time, then government needs to adopt measures to keep people from becoming unhoused; introduce rent control and vacancy control; eliminate the three-month, no-fault evictions especially for large, financialized landlords; establish land-lease communities or land trusts for non-profit housing; and set up rent banks. All of these can be implemented with minimal or no cost to government.

Closely related to housing is the issue of affordability. Many people are feeling poor – no two ways about it. Middle class people and families are feeling squeezed and pushed towards the margins and those in the margins have lost hope. It's not long into a conversation before the price of gas, groceries and home heating electricity are brought up.

Affordability was the motivation, though, behind our private Member's resolution on capping the salaries of Newfoundland and Labrador Power executives and our calls to remove the HST off home heating and children's essentials. These measures won't solve the affordability issue by themselves but could put more money into people's pockets than some of the measures in the budget.

The Minister of Finance is proud of his government's affordability measures and any measure, I will argue, that can make life more affordable is welcome, but we need bolder action. He boasted that the increase in the basic personal exemption will put \$91 million a year into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and it sounds bold. However, what I and other people of the province will actually see is an extra \$332 or less than the price of a small

cup of coffee a day or a week's groceries, if you're lucky.

The budget also continued the gas tax reduction and the elimination of the sugar tax brought in by the previous administration, so they hardly count as new initiatives. Drivers will save \$45 on their vehicles, and that's something, I suppose. But not everyone owns a car. So why not invest more in public regional transportation so those who do not drive can get around and have greater choice in where they live?

Increasing the NL Seniors' Benefit by 20 per cent sounds impressive because it's stated in percentages. In practical terms, for a senior couple with one income of \$32,500, it amounts to a \$254 increase. As one senior noted, it's not much of an increase. If you're three feet underwater and you're raised up by 20 per cent or seven inches, you're still drowning.

Another senior I spoke to noted that there's little help to help seniors themselves to age in place, to maintain their homes and so on. Often, income thresholds and regulations are so inflexible as to make programs inaccessible and useless. Seniors want to stay in their homes but are finding that option more and more out of reach.

Expanding eligibility and amounts for the Child Benefit will put roughly \$330 per child into the families with income below \$28,000, but phased out as income levels increase. Considering the price of clothing, feeding and providing a home for children, it will barely scratch the surface.

Then there are the individuals and families forced to rely on income support. Maggie Helwig rightly observed: Remember that if you rely on government support, your income is so low that even doubling it instantly would leave you far below the poverty line. Remember that we have chosen, as a society, to set social system rates at a fraction of what we acknowledge is necessary to survive. That essentially, to

be on social assistance, to be disabled, to be old, to be laid off and looking for work, is to be told that you really don't deserve to live, certainly not to live indoors.

The cause of poverty is a lack of money. As Hugh Segal observed, those with more money tend to be less poor. Half measures will not suffice. It's why the NDP continues to advocate for more non-market, community-based housing. It's why the NDP forced federal Liberals into establishing national dental care and pharmacare programs. It's why we fought to establish a Basic Income Committee, have the report released and demand that government enter into a basic income pilot project for the province.

So here's a thought: establish provincially run public grocery stores as a pilot. Federal NDP Leader Avi Lewis has proposed this idea, New York City's Mayor Zohran Mamdani announced a plan to do so, and Toronto City Council recently passed a motion to introduce a similar pilot program. This will be in direct competition to large supermarkets who have already demonstrated a willingness to fix the price of bread and overcharge for underweight meat. If we have government-run liquor stores, then why not government-run grocery stores?

If government is truly serious about tackling poverty, it could have introduced a plan to increase the minimum wage to a living wage and index it while reducing the small business tax. It could have implemented the recommendation of the report of the All-Party Committee on Basic Income. *Budget 2026* could have released details of government's new comprehensive 10-year poverty reduction strategy, which will bring the province's rates down to the lowest in the country, and I commend the minister on this and will be ready to support this goal.

The PCs had such a plan in 2006, which was highly praised; however, it's been seven months since the election. It should

have been relatively straightforward to update the previously successful plan and present it or parts of it.

*Budget 2026* also falls short in education and early childhood education. It announced the construction, rebuilding and renovations of several schools, but we need teachers. The \$28.9 million announced to hire an additional 94 teachers and 20 learning assistants is a drop in the bucket compared to what is needed to address student needs. Last year, the Liberals announced 400 new education resources and still there were 161 vacancies. There is an increasing reliance on retired teachers to make the system work.

I have to ask the Premier: What makes him so sure that his administration will be any more effective in hiring teachers than his predecessors?

In the past two weeks, I received emails from several teachers concerned about excessive rodent droppings and cleanliness in classrooms. Frustrated by the lack of concern from the district, teachers had to take to doing deep cleaning of their classrooms and had purchased their own cleaning supplies. Another teacher wrote to say it's time for teachers to stop participating in extra-curricular activities until class size and violence are addressed. The NLTA has started a wear Red for Ed campaign to call for meaningful investment in public education, and I thought: How little issues have changed since I was a teacher and president of the NLTA; how government's approach to education, regardless of political stripe, has not changed.

Government can announce plans to build schools and plans to hire teachers all it likes, our education system is facing a recruitment and retention crisis and it will not be resolved until government addresses long-standing issues such as working conditions, school violence, class size and composition and partial units.

The same applies to the announcement of \$33 million to support the establishment of additional child care spaces. If government wants to recruit and retain early childhood educators to fill these spaces, then address the issues of pension, paid sick leave, wage and working conditions, not with a steering committee but with meaningful action.

Meanwhile, government has budgeted \$500 million to cover the cost of the tuition freeze, which will only be lifted when the system is back on track. Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic have actually had their budgets cut and are facing further decreases. Departments are laying off staff and programs are being cut, so how exactly do you get these post-secondary centres of innovation and the training centres of our future workforce back on track by starving them of funds? What's the use of budgeting \$8 million to fill every unfilled nursing seat across the province when Memorial has had to cut its fast-track nursing program? How will \$5 million provide for paid work terms to students pursuing health careers in hard-to-fill areas if staff have been cut? What is the use in designing a new graduate tuition rebate program if a student is unable to complete a degree or diploma if MUN or CNA have had to layoff instructors, cut programs or reduce their offerings?

Yesterday, a government Member quoted Winston Churchill, that government cannot tax itself into prosperity. To that I say, nor can you cut your way to prosperity. Education is an investment in our future. It's not a budget line to be cut.

Finally, Speaker, if we want to make life more affordable for the current generations and generations to come, then we need to transition to a renewable and sustainable, diversified economy and away from one dependent on a single, non-renewable resource. Transitioning away from fossil fuels toward cleaner energy is not just good for the climate, it strengthens our energy, independence and security. That was the conclusion of the first conference on

transitioning away from fossil fuels this week in Columbia, in which 50 countries, including Canada, attended.

Leah Temper of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, a delegate at the conference, warns that failing to transition risks people falling into energy poverty. The war in Iran demonstrates the need to transition from fossil fuels as quickly as possible, and many countries have started to do that. Oil companies, such as British Petroleum, have doubled profits since the beginning of the war. The typical response is to reduce taxes for citizens. Temper suggests governments should tax the windfall profits of oil companies and invest it into families, green energy transition and to make life more affordable.

European countries learned this lesson during the war in Ukraine when fossil fuel prices skyrocketed. Delegates from China and other countries told Temper that their country is shifting away from fossil fuel dependence, increasing renewable energy, moving towards becoming electrostates and to become leaders in renewable energy.

So Temper warns that if our focus is solely on protecting the oil economy, then we risk being left behind and relegating our citizens to energy poverty. The failure to finalize the deal on Churchill Falls for political reasons and the decision to cancel the feasibility study on the South Coast Fjords NMCA demonstrate a short-sightedness that will harm our chances of achieving a sustainable and diversified economy for all of us.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I'm trying to hear the hon. Member.

**J. DINN:** Speaker, I'll end it there and look forward to further opportunity to speak to this budget.

As I've said, *Budget 2026* is disappointing and, while fiscal debt and debt reduction seem to be the focus, we risk creating a human resource deficit if we do not take decisive measures to address the serious social problem facing our province, our workers and our communities.

I want a future for my grandchildren where they will call this province home, that they will want to live here and raise their families here and I will continue to demand a budget that allows them to have this future.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Before we conclude, I just want to remind Members that the Resource Committee will meet in the Chamber at 6 p.m. tonight to consider the Estimates of the Department of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands.

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 we adjourn debate.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that we adjourn debate.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, 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.

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.'

Carried.

This House is now adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, May 6, at 10 a.m.

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