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Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I would like to address an incident which occurred on Thursday, May 21, 2026. After the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune and the Member for Terra Nova had their speaking privileges removed for the day, there was a further confrontation between the Members which occurred in this hon. House.

As Members of the House of Assembly, we all play a fundamental role in our system of parliamentary democracy. Responsible government, the cornerstone of our system, means that the government must be responsive to its citizens and must be accountable or responsible to Parliament.

We have all been elected to serve as representatives of the people to govern and to hold government to account. In this respect, it's difficult to overstate the importance of our position. In carrying out our parliamentary duties, our words and our actions reflect upon the people who elected us and upon this hon. House.

As Speaker, it is my responsibility to act as the guardian of the rights and privileges of Members of the House. It's my duty to preserve order and decorum, to ensure the *Standing Orders* are followed and to ensure that all Members have the opportunity to participate in debate.

As has been evident throughout this sitting, this is a role I take very seriously. The *Standing Orders* and rules of decorum exists not only to ensure that Members can exercise their individual privileges; they also serve to ensure a safe and respectful environment for all of us who work in this Chamber, including our Pages, Table Officers and other parliamentary officials.

As noted in the *Members' Parliamentary Guide*, while it is the Speaker who is charged with maintaining the dignity and decorum of the House, it is incumbent upon all Members to take responsibility for their behaviour and conduct their business in a manner that upholds the dignity of the institution.

The preamble to the Members' Code of Conduct states that as Members of this House of Assembly, we must respect the law and the institution of the Legislature, and acknowledge our need to maintain the public trust placed in us by performing our duties with accessibility, accountability, courtesy, honesty and integrity. Every one of us committed to following this Code when we were sworn in after the recent general election.

We also have a *Harassment-Free Workplace Policy*. This policy is the result of a recommendation of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections to the House of Assembly, which was concurred in by the House. Section 5.1 of the policy clearly sets out the responsibilities of Members and employees of the House, including the responsibility to act respectfully in dealings with all Members of the House of Assembly and employees, and to challenge inappropriate behaviour, objectionable conduct, when it happens, and refuse to participate in that behaviour.

While the *Harassment-Free Workplace Policy* may not strictly apply in this Chamber due to the concepts of parliamentary privilege and freedom of speech, it has been held on numerous occasions that its principles should guide us during our proceedings.

The incident which occurred last Thursday fell far below this standard. It disrupted proceedings. It was unparliamentary. It was an affront to the integrity of this hon. House. It was unacceptable and cannot be tolerated, and it should never be repeated.

As a result of this incident and under the authority of Standing Orders 7(1), 49 and 21, I therefore name you, Elvis Loveless, and I name you, Lloyd Parrott, for your unparliamentary conduct on Thursday, May 21, and I order you to withdraw from the Chamber for the remainder of this day.

I will now rule on a point of privilege raised by the Member for Mount Scio on Thursday, May 21, 2026. The Member for Mount Scio stated that it had been brought to her attention during proceedings that the Member for Lake Melville had shared on social media, a post which was, in her words, an “amplification of language advocating violence against elected Members of this House because of a position they may take on public business before the Legislature.”

The Member referenced parliamentary privilege protecting Members from intimidation, obstruction and interference in carrying out their responsibilities and allowing them to be free to debate, vote and represent their constituents without fear of threats or calls for physical violence.

In responding to the point of privilege, both the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Member for Lake Melville indicated that the post had been shared accidentally. The Member for Lake Melville stated that he commented on the post and then removed it once he realized that the original post had also been shared.

This is, yet, another incident in which conduct on social media has given rise to point of privilege in this House. Without getting into the specific content of the post in question, suffice it to say that it used crude language to suggest a violent act against certain Members of this House.

I have already spoken at some length in previous rulings about the risks of social media and the impacts that it can have on all of us as elected officials as well as our families. Social media has many benefits in

terms of freedom of speech and sharing of information and it gives everyone a platform to make their views known. Unfortunately, we are now living in an extremely polarized, global political climate in which threats of violence against elected officials are now a commonplace occurrence. Tragically, there have been all too many incidents in recent years where threats have escalated to violent actions.

It is not my role to comment on the original poster’s right to make the post or the spirit in which it was made or on the Member’s or anyone else’s personal sense of humour. What I can comment on, however, is the higher standard to which we, as elected Members of this House of Assembly, must hold ourselves. When any of us engage on social media, we must always keep in mind that we are representing the people who elected us, as well as this hon. House.

Let me be clear, as noted in the Members’ Parliamentary Guide: “... it is incumbent on all Members to take responsibility for their behaviour and conduct their business in a manner that upholds the dignity of the institution.”

As Speaker, I must determine whether there is a prima facie breach; that is whether, on first glance or on first impression, there has been a breach. While the Member’s use of Facebook may have been contemptuous of the Member’s parliamentary colleagues, it was not part of a proceeding of Parliament. Speakers have rules that comments made by Members outside of a proceeding of Parliament are, generally, not within their jurisdiction.

I would note that they are not protected by parliamentary privilege either and are subject to the same civil and criminal laws as are the comments of any other private citizen. They may also be the subject of a complaint under the Members’ Code of Conduct. Therefore, I do not find a prima facie breach of privilege based on contempt.

However, I would remind the Member and all Members that they have a responsibility to uphold the dignity and integrity of this institution and one way to do that is by acting with courtesy and respect to their parliamentary colleagues.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I just wanted to say a few words, if permitted, because I –

SPEAKER: Are you standing on –

S. O'LEARY: I'm standing on the point –

SPEAKER: Are you standing on a point of order or a point of privilege?

S. O'LEARY: Point of order.

SPEAKER: Point of order.

What is your point of order?

S. O'LEARY: Regarding the normalizing of aggressive behaviour in the House of Assembly and for your actions. I certainly commend you, Speaker, for taking action. I also wanted to represent that we have a Code of Conduct where people, of course, shall conduct themselves in accordance with the provisions and spirit of the *Standing Orders* of the House of Assembly and its fundamental objective of holding public office, that Members –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member, specifically, what section of the *Standing Orders* are you speaking of?

While I do appreciate your desire to comment on this, at the end of the day though, in terms of procedure, if you have a point of order, then you have to raise it as a point of order based on a particular section of the act and what point of order you want

to raise, as opposed to reflecting on what just occurred.

S. O'LEARY: Understood. I don't have the exact thing. Of course, you referenced the harassment workplace policy. It was only my intent to request of the Speaker and the House of Assembly that we look at mandatory anti-harassment legislation for the House, as a result of the escalation that we have seen unfold.

As well, I wanted to just table a document that I thought, for you, Speaker, and for the House of Assembly, could be of benefit to ensure that we take this very seriously, as you have just demonstrated, going forward in terms of behaviour in the House.

SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order. This is something that can be taken at another time but it's not a point of order at this time.

SPEAKER: I would have to agree with the Member. If you would like to speak to me outside of the Chamber or bring it to the appropriate Committee of the House, that will be fine, but on a point of order, it's about an actual point of order based on the *Standing Orders* that you wish to bring to the attention of the House, not a reflection on the general decorum.

S. O'LEARY: I understand.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Today, visiting our public gallery are Paul and Emma White, husband and daughter of the late Marina Redmond who is the subject of a Member's statement today.

Welcome to our House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Corner Brook, Humber - Bay of Islands, Labrador West, Lake Melville and Lewisporte - Twillingate.

The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I rise to pay tribute to the late Marina Redmond who, on Friday, received a Premier's Medals for Arts, Heritage, Sports and Recreation.

Marina served the City of Corner Brook for 27 years, including 23 as city clerk. Marina embodied public service through her dedication, her fairness and her practicality. She elevated public service through her commitment to improving process, her understanding of the big picture and her calming influence.

Marina was a devoted wife and mother, and a good friend. She also had a passion for sports and recreation.

Marina played many sports and when she wasn't playing, she volunteered and organized. She introduced Corner Brook to pickleball. She was always up for a new sport, a new hike and a new adventure.

Though a fierce competitor on the court, she understood that recreation isn't just for elite athletes. It was about staying active, fostering teamwork and building community.

Because of her dedication and commitment to recreation and public service, one year ago, Corner Brook named its new recreation center in her honor.

I ask all Members to join me in paying tribute to Marina Redmond, an outstanding

public servant, athlete and community builder.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize teacher Nicole Lovell's Grade 6 class at Templeton Academy in Meadows, who are the 2026 national winners of Agriculture in the Classroom Canada's Mission Explorium challenge.

Through Mission Explorium, a national program open to Grade 6 to Grade 8 students, participants step into the role of agriculture and food problem solvers. Over 5,300 students registered from across the country.

This year, students were challenged to design a sustainable community on a deserted island. The panel of agricultural and education experts were impressed with the Grade 6 class's innovation, design, approach, creative storytelling and thoughtful integration of sustainable food and community systems. The panel also noted that their submission showed a deep understanding of what it means to be true agriculture and food problem solvers.

Previous to competing at the national level, this class successfully competed, winning Region 2, to represent our province. Ms. Lovell's Grade 6 class will now receive an indoor garden, which supports continued hands-on learning in food production and sustainability.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating these Grade 6 students on their achievement. Receiving this national recognition is very impressive and something to be proud of.

Great job, guys.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: Thank you, Speaker.

You'll have to excuse my voice.

I wanted to rise in this House today to talk about the 102 students who graduated from Menihek High School in Labrador West last week. I would like to congratulate each and every one of them on reaching this significant milestone. Their unique talents and perspectives have enriched our school community.

This moment marks the beginning of an exciting adventure. They should embrace change; cherish the memories they created and look forward to the limitless possibilities that await them. As they step into the world beyond high school, dare to dream big, work hard and be persistent.

Their potential is limitless, and they have the power to make a positive impact on the world, believe in themselves and their ability to overcome challenges, celebrate their achievements, no matter how small, and use any setbacks as stepping stones to greatness. Their journey will be unique, and the path they carve will inspire others to follow their aspirations with courage and determination.

Always remember, success is not just about reaching a destination but enjoying the journey. Keep learning, stay curious and let your passions guide you. The world is waiting for their unique contributions, so go out there and make it extraordinary.

I'm wishing them all the success, joy and fulfillment in their future endeavours. Congratulations to the class of 2026 at Menihek High School.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to recognize a lifetime of volunteering from a very special lady.

Barbara McGowan was born in Cartwright and moved to Goose Bay in the 1960s where she met Glenn McGowan from New Brunswick. They were married and has three children. But just eight years after they were married, Glenn was killed in a plane crash, leaving Barb to raise three young children on her own.

Barb is now a proud grandmother to four grandsons and, at almost 79 years of age, she still walks every day and exercises. Barb likes to keep busy, and she has been volunteering now for nearly 45 years. She began volunteering as a teacher's assistant at the primary school in the '80s and, just recently, after 29 long years, she stopped volunteering at the Labrador Friendship Centre and at the Friendship Centre's food bank, where her presence and warm smile are surely missed by the members of the community.

Barb is a wonderful cook and baker and an avid reader and crocheter, and many of the items she creates she donates as gifts or for charity. She just loves helping others.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in recognizing a lifetime of service to a beautiful, strong Labrador woman, Mrs. Barbara McGowan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. BUTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize and celebrate the Twillingate-New World Island Fish, Fun & Folk Festival, which proudly marks its 44th year as one of our province's longest running community festivals, which takes place from July 22-26.

For more than four decades, this festival has showcased the heart and spirit of Twillingate and New World Island – bringing together residents, volunteers, performers and visitors to celebrate our culture, traditions and sense of community.

An event of this scale does not happen without months of dedicated planning and an extraordinary commitment of volunteer time. From organizing events and coordinating performers to fundraising and managing logistics, it truly takes a community working together.

Each year, the festival offers something more for everyone, including a parade, traditional meals, talent show, live traditional music, seniors' day celebrations, family activities and events for children. This year's lineup also includes performances by the Ennis Sisters, fireworks, a car and boat show, gospel concert, artisan markets and much more.

I commend the organizing committee, volunteers, sponsors and community members whose hard work keeps these beloved traditions alive. Their efforts strengthen local pride, celebrate our heritage and make Twillingate and New World Island a welcoming place for all.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I also have a request here for the Member for Windsor Lake with leave.

Does the Member for Windsor Lake have leave for a Member's statement?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to all my colleagues in the House for providing leave.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador has lost a true hero with the passing of Johnny Pauls.

A proud veteran of the Second World War, Mr. Pauls answered the call to serve his country during one of the darkest chapters in history. Like so many of his generation, he demonstrated extraordinary courage, sacrifice and dedication in defense of freedom and democracy.

But his service did not end when he returned home. For decades, Johnny Pauls continued to give back to his community of Spaniard's Bay and to veterans across our province through his tireless work with the Royal Canadian Legion. He was a leader, a mentor and a proud advocate for those who served in uniform.

His life was defined by service to others, love of community and unwavering commitment to remembering the sacrifices of veterans.

On behalf of our caucus, I extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends, fellow veterans and all those whose lives he touched.

May we always remember and honour his legacy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I think it would be in order if we had a moment of silence for our fallen veteran.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: May he rest in peace.

Thank you.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate Mary Pia Benuen – a woman who, through her humble wisdom to see her people have a better life, worked tirelessly, spoke up and challenged governments, organizations and other people on how they treated Innu, our First Peoples of this country.

At a time when there were few Innu and Inuit health care workers, this humble woman grew into a remarkable leader and trailblazer. As Labrador's first accredited Innu nurse, Mary Pia has dedicated her life to advancing Indigenous representation and delivering compassionate, culturally grounded care.

Raised in Sheshatshiu, Mary Pia grew up proud of her Innu identity, guided by her family's teachings, learning traditional skills and carrying those values forward through her life and career. This pride and self respect was contrary to the general attitude towards the Innu and their culture and language.

Determined to do better for her people, Mary Pia pursued education with determination, travelling to St. John's to complete high school before continuing on to nursing school in Ontario. She later spent seven years at the Lake Melville hospital in Happy Valley-Goose Bay where she became known and respected for providing care that acknowledged language and cultural needs of Innu patients.

For nearly 30 years, Mary Pia has served as a public health nurse in her community. In 1997, she became the health director for Sheshatshiu, bringing another layer of strength to local health care leadership.

Through her advocacy, speaking of Innu history and a lifelong commitment to her people, Mary Pia helped shape a more inclusive and responsive health care system.

Later this month, she will be awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws from Memorial University in recognition of her extraordinary contributions. I am proud to know and work with such a strong, powerful Innu woman.

I ask all hon. colleagues to join me in recognizing Mary Pia Benuen for her outstanding contributions and service to her people, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the extraordinary contributions of Mary Pia Benuen. As Labrador's first accredited Innu nurse, Mary Pia Benuen broke barriers and helped pave the way for future generations of Indigenous health professionals in this province.

Her lifelong dedication to culturally grounded care, advocacy and leadership has left a lasting impact on communities across Labrador. From her years serving as a public health nurse in Sheshatshiu to her work strengthening local health care leadership, her commitment to her people and community is deeply admirable.

Mary Pia's story reminds us of the importance of Indigenous voices and lived experience within our health care system, and the need to continue supporting culturally respectful care and Indigenous leadership in health professions.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I congratulate Mary Pia Benuen on this well-deserved recognition and thank her for her service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

We recognize Mary Pia Benuen for all she has contributed to our province, to the people of Labrador and congratulate her for her honorary doctorate.

Our province needs more Mary Pia Benuens. That is why we call on this government to increase investment in educational opportunities for our Indigenous children and youth so that they can follow in the footsteps of this great lady. By levelling the playing field, we will bring true reconciliation closer to reality.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, I am pleased to rise to acknowledge the growth of a Newfoundland and Labrador company, North Atlantic. The Premier and the Minister of Energy and Mines were on hand to mark the official opening of the company's new 30,000-square-foot headquarters on Kelsey Drive in St. John's.

From supporting key industries to serving communities across Newfoundland and Labrador, North Atlantic has built a strong reputation through its professionalism and commitment to customers. In just three years, the company has expanded from 130 employees to almost 500 operating in three provinces, and with another 1,500 employees in France.

This new headquarters represents a clear signal of confidence in North Atlantic's workforce, its businesses and our province. It also reflects how North Atlantic has evolved, strengthening its presence in areas such as energy, logistics and marine services, and positioning itself to help shape the future of our economy.

Speaker, our government is focused on creating conditions that allow companies like North Atlantic to grow, invest and create meaningful jobs. When businesses succeed, our communities grow stronger.

Our government congratulates North Atlantic on this achievement, and we will continue to work with them to build a stronger, more competitive Newfoundland and Labrador for all of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm pleased to join him in recognizing North Atlantic's growth and the opening of their new headquarters. Any time a Newfoundland and Labrador company expands its operations and its workforce, especially to this magnitude, it is indeed a positive sign for our province.

Moments like this remind us that success in this sector is built on long-term investment, planning and regulatory stability. Previous

Liberal governments strengthened the energy file, advanced key infrastructure and supported the skilled workforce that companies like North Atlantic rely on today.

North Atlantic's work in energy, logistics and marine services plays an important role in the communities across our province, and it highlights the need for clear timelines, predictable decision-making and real follow-through from government. Industry leaders and workers want progress that moves projects forward, not just announcements.

Speaker, we congratulate North Atlantic on this achievement, and we will continue advocating for an energy environment that supports workers, attracts investment and strengthens communities right across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

We agree that government should do more to allow home-grown companies to succeed and create good, meaningful jobs; but, in doing so, we ask that this government make it easier for these spoils of success to be shared more equitably for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We ask that you reintroduce the card-check certification and bring in anti-scab labour legislation so that every group of workers who wants to be in a union can do so.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Does the Premier agree with the St. John's Board of Trade's warning that continued delays and uncertainty around the Churchill River negotiations could jeopardize economic growth and cost our province billions of dollars?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I will agree with is that if we had to rush ahead with this MOU as it was currently set up, which they wanted to move ahead with quickly, our province would be in a bad place long term.

We recognize that in the report here that was provided by the Independent Review Committee. We understand the deficiencies that are highlighted by that. We need to get a review done. We had that done and now we look forward to negotiating a deal that will be actually the best deal for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, the Board of Trade also said a referendum will create costly delays and uncertainty.

Can the Premier confirm whether he's ruled out doing a referendum that he promised during the course of the election?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, there have been lots of talk about a referendum, but we ought to be talking about the MOU that we almost went ahead with, except that we stood our ground and said no and ordered a complete independent review.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: And as I have said before and I'll repeat it, the first thing we need to do is we need to get a deal, and we need to get a better deal than what was envisioned in this MOU.

That's why we have talked about the need for more power, more transmission and more value, and those are the things we'll be talking about negotiating on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: There's a reason we're talking about the referendum. It's the first thing the Premier promised during the course of the general election campaign.

So I ask: Is the Premier going to live up to his election promises, or perhaps he'll do what his friend Danielle Smith did and have a referendum on having a referendum?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I have said, we need to get a deal. That's the important part for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – a deal that actually protects them long term.

Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said in a recent scrum that there would have been changes to the MOU. I've got to ask him, again, did he know about the 2 per cent escalator clause when he sat around the Cabinet table?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, part of the problem with the House of Assembly is that they continue to act like they're in Opposition and that we're in government. I do have all those answers but, unfortunately, the Premier is the one that should be telling Newfoundlanders and Labradorians about where he's going with the negotiations with Hydro-Québec.

What we do know is that the Premier secretly hired Mr. Jerome Kennedy five months ago and, last week, said Mr. Kennedy was on the negotiating team that started working just two weeks ago. Then, on Thursday, the Premier said the first thing we got to do is turn around and get a negotiating team in place. As usual, the Premier does not have just one story.

Which of the Premier's three timelines is accurate?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, make no mistake about it, what we are doing is doing exactly what should have been done. We are going to make sure that we get more transmission, that we get more value and we certainly are going to make sure we protect the interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Again, I go back and ask the Leader of the Opposition, if you knew the 2 per cent escalator clause was in the MOU, why didn't you change it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, we are hearing rumours that negotiations have been taking place with Hydro-Québec, so much so that there's a plan to announce an updated MOU soon, potentially as early as June.

Is that accurate?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I can say is there has been one call between the president of Hydro-Québec and our chief negotiator. So, other than that, I'm not sure exactly where the Leader of the Opposition is getting his information.

But I still want an answer to that question, because that 2 per cent clause had a huge impact. It could have left us owning \$30 billion. So again I ask: If that was in there and they knew about it, why didn't they change it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, again, I'd be happy to answer the questions. It's his job to answer the questions which he's not doing; he's deferring.

I can tell you that I knew what was in the MOU and I was confident we would have negotiated good, solid, final agreements for the people of this province and not only that, I would have been open and transparent about it as well.

Speaker, the Premier has said over and over he doesn't believe in deadlines. Was this his position because he was comfortable with ongoing secret negotiations, which the public weren't aware of?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I have said and will continue to say is that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve a benefit and an agreement that looks after their long-term interests – not short-term interests, but long-term interests – a benefit that doesn't include escalator clauses.

I find it amazing that they can say they knew about it, yet put it in there against the advice of their own negotiators. Can the Leader of the Opposition explain that? Why would you put that in if your own negotiators said no to it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, at some point, it's going to be time to talk about what they're going to put in the MOU. So let's try it now.

Given the Premier was waiting for the panel's report on the MOU to tell him what he should think about it, will the Premier confirm that any future deal with Hydro-Québec will only be signed – and I'm quoting from the report – if CF(L)Co were able to wheel power through Hydro-Québec's transmission system to external markets?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I've been quite clear on what we need if we're going to move forward as a Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. For too long, we have been held captive – for too long.

That original MOU would have allowed us not to do anything other than sell power to Quebec. We need an alternative, that's why we're asking for more transmission, that's

why we're asking for more value, and we intend to get both.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Clarity is the farthest thing from what has happened in this situation since this Premier has taken over. Concerns were referenced in the Premier's biased report as coming from – and I quote – expert advisors. Yet, the Premier still hasn't said the names or the qualifications of these so-called experts, or insisted that the panelists do so.

So one simple question: Does the Premier know who he is relying on?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I've said before, if we had to rely on the previous MOU, Newfoundland and Labrador would have been held ransom for another 50 years. We turned around and had an independent review assessment done. They've done their work.

Let's talk about something else that's in that report. Let's talk about economic value. The fact that the previous MOU didn't even consider what the opportunities were to develop industry in Newfoundland and Labrador, and they failed to do that. They simply focused on how much money can we get and how quickly can we get it.

They just simply wanted to sell it all, take as much money as they could upfront and pay for some of their election promises.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: At least we would have kept our election promises, Speaker.

I say to the Premier: Tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, do you know the names of the experts who provided evidence to the panelists, yes or no?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I'm not privy to that information. As the Member opposite knows, that Independent Review Committee was truly independent. I did not influence them in any way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: But I tell you what is concerning. What is concerning is when they make a statement that they didn't listen to their negotiators, they didn't listen to their own people and they didn't listen to their financial experts when they included that 2 per cent escalation clause.

I'd ask the Member opposite: How did that happen?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: It was worth waiting for an answer finally, Speaker, after seven months.

Is the Premier really telling Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that he's not privy to the experts that provided advice on the report he's going to rely on for the future of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

So, Premier, confirm with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians what you said – you do not know who you are relying on, on the basis of this report?

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask the Member that you address the Chair.

The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, we put in an Independent Review Committee that has done their work. They have presented a report. I might add the two members of the Independent Review Committee that were appointed by the previous Liberal government. But, now, they're not good enough anymore.

They've turned around and they've done a job. They've turned around and saved this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador from entering into another bad deal, just like 1969.

So we're going to fix that, and that's exactly what we're doing. We have a new negotiating team put in place, and they're going to go out and get us a better deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, the difference is, the public knew who the advisors were and, in fact, the advisors sat right there in the House of Assembly, and not only told everybody who they were, but answered questions about the deal.

So does the Premier really expect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to believe that he's relying on a report, and he has no idea who provided the information to give him advice on how to move forward with the deal with Hydro-Québec?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, maybe it was the same advisors that turned around and advised the former government that they shouldn't put in a 2 per cent escalation clause.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Maybe it was the same negotiators who turned around and told the previous Liberal government you shouldn't put in a 2 per cent escalation clause. So let's talk about that. That could've cost the government \$30 billion.

They don't want to talk about that. They accepted that. They went ahead and overruled their own negotiators. They overruled their own financial advisors. We intend to fix it.

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I ask the Premier: Why isn't he concerned about where this evidence came from? Who are they? Are they Facebook experts? Are they engineering experts? Are they hydro experts? How can he not know who these individuals are? How can Newfoundlanders and Labradorians be expected to rely on people who the Premier doesn't even know who he's relying on?

So I ask the Premier: Will he finally tell the panellists to tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who they heard from and who you think you're relying on?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Once again, Speaker, we turned around and actually engaged and put it in regulation. We took the shackles off the Independent Review Committee. The previous Independent Review Committee was handcuffed by the fact that they could only look at certain

things. They could only speak to certain people.

We put it in regulation that says they could go out and receive submissions from anybody they want. They could see whatever documents they want. They did that. Over 350 submissions were received by the Independent Review Committee and, clearly, some of them were from people on both sides of the House and all over Newfoundland and Labrador.

So they've done their homework, we've got a report to implement and we're going to do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, there is absolutely nothing clear about who these 350 people were. We have no idea who they were. We have no idea if they're from this side or that side of the House, if they're experts or if they're kids in kindergarten. I have no idea. It could just be colouring the pictures that kids did in school.

Will the Premier tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who these 350 people are that we're expected to rely on for the future of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, let's talk about what's in the report.

Let's talk about the fact that the economic value of our resources was not in there. The fact that we turned around and did an MOU without ever considering what the opportunities were for development in our province, what the opportunities were for the development of new industry in Labrador. None of that was looked at.

So that's one of the recommendations that's in the report. It talks about doing an economic analysis to make sure that we look at what the opportunities are for new industries, what's the maximum value and the type of revenue that could be generated. That's what we're doing. We're doing that work right now.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I ask the Premier, does he not understand why it's important for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to know who these people were, or does he not care because he's trying to hide something?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I said, it was an independent review process. They remain independent.

They've already given their opinion on that, but I can certainly look at the report and see when it highlights the fact that they didn't listen to their own negotiating team, that they didn't listen to their own financial advisors. That was information contained in their report. Where did they get that information from? Maybe they got it from their own advisors and from their own negotiating team, previously.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, let's talk about the report then – because the illusive experts

that we don't know who they are, what their qualifications are or how they came to be – "... particularly after 2041, prices for CF power will be more tightly linked to HQ's avoided replacement cost than to broader market value."

The report also notes: Implementing the Schedule F principles based, block-pricing model will be particularly complex and will require detailed negotiations.

So I ask the Premier: Isn't that the point of Schedule F to confirm that our province gets the right price based on broader market value for market prices both externally and to its own ratepayers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, I was one of the fortunate ones that was in the House last January to ask questions to the panellists that came in. What the Leader of the Opposition referenced is the experts that they brought in for us to ask questions to.

I think what the Leader of the Opposition is missing is that those same players are still players in this review that we've got conducted here. We had the CEO of Newfoundland Hydro here that we asked questions for the whole time that we asked, the assistant, they are still part of it. Guy Holburn, who was a significant expert witness at the Muskrat Falls inquiry, was part of the ones that were part of the IRC.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance: Does he know the names of the experts who provided advice to the independent panel?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I would ask the Leader of the Opposition, would they be not experts, the ones I just mentioned? Would they be not experts, the ones that the then-government brought in last January? Would the chair or the CEO of Newfoundland Hydro not be classed as expert? Would Guy Holborn, Dr. Holborn, who was a significant part of Justice Richard LeBlanc's inquiry on Muskrat Falls, that the hon. Member was part of, would he not be an expert because he was involved?

How many experts does he need named in the House of Assembly for him to have comfort to know that this IRC has done a good job?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I appreciate getting all the questions, I have an answer for them. If there's 350 people and he named three, I'd like the answer to name the 347 other people who provided the information. So if you can provide those, I'd like that very much, the Finance Minister.

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

C. PARDY: I may have missed a question there but I'd like to stand on it.

I would say the number is in how many experts did they bring into the House, and we don't want to look back. What they brought in, I've just listed three experts that we would know that are directly involved with it. What he wants to know is the number of extras. How many more experts were involved? All I'm saying is these were three that were critical.

What was missing before was how much of what we can do with the economics and the power that would be brought to Newfoundland and Labrador. That is what we're doing now and that wasn't part of it before. Ten years they were in government and no energy plan. Imagine, no energy plan.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, does the Minister of Finance know who the experts were who provided advice to the independent panel? If he doesn't know, why is he comfortable taking advice as the Minister of Finance –

SPEAKER: I would ask that you address the Chair.

J. HOGAN: If he doesn't know, is he not worried that he's taking advice from people who he don't know what their qualifications are?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: The witnesses that they brought in as experts, we know that they've got a high degree of expertise and I've named three of them, referenced here in this House. The Leader of the Opposition has not acknowledged and said, yes, they are experts.

How many more are there? Well, we know there were more that they would have referenced, but the report writers and the authors were these mentioned, these people that I had just referenced in the House. They are experts who they

consulted with for their opinion and they are very knowledgeable in and of itself.

Would the leadership of NL Hydro be well aware of what the needs were in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: He very much clearly acknowledged that the people who came to the House of Assembly were experts. What we want to know is who the other people are that you're saying it was okay to rely on? You keep referring to these innocuous people, nebulous people. They provided the most important advice on the most important deal of Newfoundland and Labrador's history.

So can the minister confirm whether he knows the names of these 347 other people that provided advice, if he's just relying on these three?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can take comfort that there were experts involved with the IRC. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can take comfort to know did they consult with people who had a high degree of knowledge in the industry? Of course, they did.

The experts that came into the House of Assembly, we didn't ask them who they consulted with. We didn't need to know. If the experts came in and they were notable experts, then listen, that is what we want, to know that they had people that they would consult with.

They did their consultation and they came back with a report – a report that corrected the errors of the previous government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: For the record, is the Minister of Finance saying that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians don't need to know that information and just rely on us, trust us? Is that the position of this government and its Finance Minister?

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

C. PARDY: Absolutely not – absolutely not.

We can agree and the Opposition would agree that what I listed, they were experts. Who those experts consulted with, that's what they want to know. The report stands on itself.

The Leader of the Opposition stood up in his campaign when he stood up and said, \$225 billion for the Newfoundland and Labrador residents – \$225 billion. They never, ever mentioned \$30.8 billion, which is the real value. Why did they not mention the \$30.8 billion, the real value? Why did they select \$225 billion? Why?

So I would say we've got to be upfront with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I would like to hear the rest of that thought and say we want to be upfront with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians

and tell them who the panel spoke to, but I don't think that is ever going to come.

So something is not being told to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and I say to the Premier and I say to the Finance Minister, the lack of openness and transparency is on them and that's their legacy.

Speaker, the panelists said a shorter contract for the CF PPAs they contemplated in the MOU would offer meaningful advantages to NLHS and the province.

Will the Premier confirm if a future deal will have a shorter contract as recommended by his biased panel?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I can confirm is we will have a better deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: In August 2025, a Liberal government press release stated the MOU – as my colleague just said – would bring over \$225 billion in new revenue in increased power capacity, but the Independent Review Committee included on page 38, "The total financial benefit to the provincial treasury of the overall MOU is best represented by the net present value amount, which is estimated at approximately \$31 billion (including estimated rate mitigation costs) rather than by the \$227 billion nominal amount presented in government documents. Of the \$31 billion, \$9.2 billion will be received prior to 2042."

SPEAKER: The hon. Premier's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier and Energy Minister, last week, used a strategy to criticize us for the 1969 Churchill Falls contract which, we all know, is lopsided. The public can see through that though as, obviously, none of us had anything to do with public policy back in 1969. Many of us – well, I was – but others here weren't born.

If it was an option, however, we wouldn't bring back the negotiators, the architects of the 1969 deal, to give us advice; however, Muskrat Falls, also known as a bad deal, the Premier has decided to bring back those architects to advise on Churchill Falls, again.

Why is the Premier taking advice from people who've already proven they can't be trusted with hydroelectric projects?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I think the Member opposite ought to take the time to read the credentials of the people who we have appointed to the negotiating committee because what he just said doesn't reflect their ability or anything to do with the work that they've done in the past.

They are professional people that we have engaged with who will do a tremendous job. I'm glad and proud to have all three of them on the committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, one of the members of that panel said that Muskrat

Falls would be a project that would pay for itself, and I'll leave it at that.

The Premier likes to draw false comparisons to the 1969 deal but it's not. Ironically though, the Premier's delays are keeping us stuck in the 1969 contract. We would have gotten \$1.5 billion – almost \$1.5 billion – had we gotten this deal at the end of April.

Will the Premier commit to receiving compensation to make up for the billions of dollars he's lost our province, already, by keeping us stuck in the 1969 deal?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: There are a couple of times I stood in this House, at least to state as far as what I knew. They were all in Cabinet back in the decision when they knew they created the budget that we came in on.

There was no \$1.5 billion in that budget – that was a budget line for this coming budget. It wasn't there. Was there \$1 billion there? There was not \$1 billion there. Was it half a billion? No, it wasn't, but there was an amount there, but the Leaders of the Opposition and the Energy critic will stand up time and time again and say that we'd have no deficit.

We wouldn't have a deficit this year, next year, next year after – wrong, incorrect.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you, Speaker.

Twenty-five questions asked so far and no answers. I guess that's why it's Question

Period, not answer period, but I have confidence in this minister.

Speaker, the story this morning on allnewfoundlandlabrador.com states that the province failed to award the contract for the swing vessel RFP for the busy Fogo Island, Change Islands, and Bell Island routes after receiving three proposals from companies.

I ask the minister: Why was the contract not awarded?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

The short answer to the question is they weren't compliant. There was a problem with one of the bids and the other three bids were not compliant, which is par for the course, unfortunately. We were disappointed, but we're not giving up by any stretch. We're looking at probably using a broker that Marine Atlantic actually employed after their RFP failed. There's another bidder that's come forward, too, to discuss. We may even go with our own build.

The bottom line is we're committed to having a swing vessel; we're committed to the ferries in this province; and we're not going to back away from that commitment. We'll follow through until we get the answers and get what's needed for another swing vessel.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

According to a notice on the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services website, on June 1, 2026, the community walk-in clinic and newcomer health clinic will relocate temporarily from 50 Mundy Pond Road to 850 Topsail Road to accommodate renovations.

The notice recommends they check Metrobus for schedules. The clinic regularly turns people away because appointments are filled.

So given the fact that many people who visit the clinic have no vehicle and will have to rely on two busses with a stopover at the Village Mall to get to the clinic, I ask the minister: Will her department provide a direct shuttle service from the Mundy Pond clinic to the clinic on Topsail Road until renovations are complete?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, we recognize that having the temporary closure is creating some problems. We are trying to address the spacing issue. We are looking at ways that we can actually make sure that people who need to travel and don't have the supports, like vehicles, are supported, Speaker. We're looking into that now and, hopefully, we'll have some solutions shortly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, there is a critical shortage of staff at the urgent care clinic at Stavanger Drive. Only two of the six nurse practitioner positions are filled and there's a shortage of doctors. Some have quit since the clinic opened in January.

I ask the Minister of Health: What is her department doing to correct this shortage?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, the Member and the Leader of the Third Party is making good points. Those are the issues I'm dealing with. I recognize there are staffing issues. I recognize that there are recruitment and retention issues right across the province.

One of the things we're dealing with is trying to change the culture where, if there's a problem: oh, well, we'll just take the easy way out. We are having trouble staffing the urgent care centre: we'll close it earlier. Actually, I'm going to say honestly, it's ridiculous, but these are some of the options that were put back to me, Speaker.

We are not going to accept that. We're going to actually try to make sure that health care is delivered to people in our province.

AN HON. MEMBER: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I was pleased to attend the We're Here For You Canada events yesterday hosted by IPV survivor and advocate, Sarah Sherman. Joined by my colleague and members of Unifor, we had fulsome discussions as to why intimate partner violence must begin in this province with a declaration that it is an epidemic to continue raising awareness and ensure proper supports are in place for those experiencing violence.

I ask the minister: When will this government officially declare intimate partner violence an epidemic in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

While we were in Opposition, we recognized that gender-based violence was basically being failed by the past government, Speaker. When we got into government, we started taking steps.

One of the things we have to ensure is that we have proper staffing to make sure the supports are available to people. We have to make sure we have dedicated staff. We also have to make sure that, in actual fact, we are able to work with the stakeholders and the advocates.

I went into Women and Gender, myself and my colleague, what we found was vacancy and we've also found positions that were temporary positions which were hard to recruit for.

Speaker, we are addressing it. We are staffing up. We are getting ready. We are actually going to tackle gender-based violence –

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: Unfortunately, that didn't answer the question.

Speaker, we can continue to see topical news reports highlighting the devastating impact intimate partner violence has in our communities. This is an epidemic that will only worsen if government does not act with urgency.

In a survey by Act Now, the Premier committed to introduce legislation for pre-conviction ankle monitoring for offenders of

intimate partner violence within the first two years of government.

I ask the minister: Will we see this legislation this fall or will survivors be forced to continue waiting for what could be life-saving protection?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, I don't know where the Member opposite came up with I wasn't addressing the questions. In order to address gender-based violence, you actually have to make sure you have the proper resources in place so that people don't fall through the cracks. Also, you have to make sure that you're helping and supporting stakeholders, Speaker, that are there working on behalf of people who are in crisis because of gender-based violence. We have to make sure that we are properly staffed, we are properly resourced and that's what this government is doing.

We've only been in government eight months, Speaker, we've made significant inroads. You talk to any of the advocates out there, they will say that this government is a changed government that's going to actually change the way these issues are addressed.

We are going to deliver, Speaker, and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: – when it comes to gender-based violence, Speaker, we are not going to politic on the backs of –

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Pursuant to the motion of referral of April 29, 2026, and in accordance with Standing Order 72, the Government Services Committee met on five occasions: April 30, 2026; May 7, 2026; May 20, 2026; May 21, 2026; and May 22, 2026.

The Government Services Committee have considered the matters to them referred and pursuant to Standing Order 75(2) have directed me to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of Consolidated Fund Services; Executive Council; Department of Finance; Department of Government Services; Department of Labrador Affairs; Public Procurement Agency; Public Service Commission; and Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. Further, the Committee recommends that the report be concurred in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. POWER: Thank you, Speaker.

Pursuant to the motion of referral of April 29, 2026, and in accordance with Standing Order 72, the Social Services Committee met on six occasions: April 29, 2026; May 4, 2026; May 5, 2026; May 19, 2026; May 21, 2026; and May 25, 2026.

The Social Services Committee have considered the matters to them referred and pursuant to Standing Order 75(2) have directed me to report that they have passed without amendments the Estimates of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; Department of Health and Community Services; Department of Justice and Public Safety; Department of Municipal and Community Affairs; Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation; Department of Seniors; and Department of Social Supports and Well-Being. Further, the Committee recommends the report be concurred in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

M. BUTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Pursuant to the motion referred on April 29, 2026, in accordance with Standing Order 72, the Resource Committee met on six occasions: May 4, 2026; May 5, 2026; May 6, 2026; May 7, 2026; May 8, 2026; and May 19, 2026.

The Resource Committee have considered the matters to them referred and pursuant to Standing Order 75(2) have directed me to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of the Department of Energy and Mines; Department of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change; Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture; Department of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands; Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development; and Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation. Further, the Committee recommends that the report be concurred in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May 25, 2026.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That, notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday May 27, 2026, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and the conduct of Government Business.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that on tomorrow I will move: That, in accordance with Standing Order 8(8), the winter-spring 2026 sitting of the House of Assembly be extended beyond Thursday, May 28, 2026; and

That this House shall sit until it adjourns to the call of the Chair; and

That notwithstanding Standing Order 8(3), the week of June 8, 2026, shall not be a constituency week.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Pharmaceutical Services Act, Bill 19.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

The reason for this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS the Atlantic Charter road in Ship Harbour leads to a designated national historic site developed through the dedication of volunteers in partnership with the provincial government; and

WHEREAS this road, 3 kilometres in length, serves as the primary access route to the site and is essential for the public's use and tourism value; and

WHEREAS since the establishment of the site, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure has historically graded the road at least once annually; and

WHEREAS in many years, the road was graded in May or June, however, in some years, maintenance has occurred too late in the season, impacting safe access during the peak tourism period which begins in June; and

WHEREAS timely grading each summer is necessary to ensure the road is passable,

safe and welcoming for visitors, residents and tourism operators; and

WHEREAS maintaining proper access to the historic site supports local tourism, community pride, economic activity and the preservation of an important part of Newfoundland and Labrador's heritage;

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 direct the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure to ensure that the Atlantic Charter road in Ship Harbour is graded and made safely passable no later than June of each year and to maintain it in a condition consistent with its designation as a national historic site and its importance to the tourism and public access.

Speaker, the Atlantic Charter site marks the exact location where US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill secretly met in August 1941 to draft the historic Atlantic Charter. It is adjacent to Argentia. They do get a significant number of visitors trying to navigate and often the cars will start to go down the road and have to haul in and people will get out and hike.

That's fine for those who can walk and can hike because it's quite the walk, but for seniors and persons with disabilities it's not accessible. That's really unfortunate because people, they look it up and they read about it and they figure it's an accessible site, but when they arrive there, unfortunately, it's not.

So I really hope the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure takes this into consideration and makes this road passable.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise on a petition for better pay for self-managed home care and respite workers.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The disparity in wages and benefits between self-managed home care/respite workers and those employed by agencies in Newfoundland and Labrador raises significant concerns. The Premier promised to increase the hourly wage of home care workers from \$17.05 to \$21.05 per hour over the next five years, but this promised excluded self-managed home care workers; and

Currently, self-managed home care/respite workers in the province still earn \$17.05 per hour; agency-based home care workers earn \$19.45 per hour; and minimum wage workers earn \$16 per hour; and

A self-managed home care/respite worker may have the same training, serve the same client and carry out the same duties as an agency-based worker, yet still receive significantly less pay.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to address this inequity by raising the wages of self-managed home care/respite workers to be on par with those of their agency-based counterparts and commit to maintaining this wage parity into the future.

Speaker, for a lot of families who depend on the home care/respite workers it's about a relationship. It's about people that they've chosen to work best with their family members. So it comes down to making sure that we have equal pay for the same work, same pay for the same work.

This is about addressing a disparity. This is a type of work, in many ways, you have to be a special person for this. It's not a job where you simply put up your heels and sit

back. It becomes an active involvement with the person's life.

In this case, what the signatories to this petition are seeking is equity – equity in pay for the same type of work.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance for a reply to the petition.

C. PARDY: Thank you to my hon. Member for presenting the petition on behalf of the residents in his district.

In this budget, we are increasing the pay of the self-managed home care by \$2 per hour. Every dollar increase is \$6.3 million annualized. It will be \$12.7 million for the \$2. While we don't have exact parity at that point in time, we thought it important in year one of the budget to make sure that we significantly close that gap.

The question that has been asked in my district is: When will we receive that? Well, when the hon. Members vote for the budget, because we know of the degree that we're going to put relief, \$226 million going out. In addition to that, the \$12.7 million for that \$2 increase. When you vote for that budget, on July 1 we will see that increase. For those with the Seniors' Benefit, July 3 we'll see the Seniors' Benefit, the 20 per cent increase in there.

I do look forward to the time where you vote because I know that we want to address affordability in Newfoundland and Labrador. Any question you've got about the budget is usually not about affordability, it's about what's not in there. But there is lots in there for you to vote for.

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.

I rise to table a petition for government must use real artists over AI for projects.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Artists in Newfoundland and Labrador are experiencing job losses and fewer opportunities for employment because corporations and governments use AI to cut costs and avoid paying workers in the creative industries; and

Graphics and images made through AI have the potential to manipulate public opinion because users can create false and misleading materials; and

AI uses data, images, videos, texts and other materials created by others who receive no compensation to generate works that have monetary value.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commit to using real artists for all government physical media, contracted ad work, marketing and communications conducted by all employees, contractors, consultants, partners, students, volunteers, vendors, agents and third parties.

I will table this petition, Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity.

I will note that AI is an international discussion right now and certainly there are lots of concerns about job losses that are happening right across the world and copyright infringement, et cetera. There are a number of different issues that are happening.

This particular petition – there are more out in the community – was signed solely by the film industry workers that were here in the front lobby of the Confederation Building that were working on the local production, and of course we encountered them as we

came into the front lobby. These are people who we will be taking work from if we do not adhere to addressing the dangers and the challenges of AI replacing work that people desperately need in the cultural sector and otherwise.

Thank you, Speaker; I so table.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: No further petitions?

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, pursuant to Standing Order 11(1), that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May 25.

That's a correction from earlier.

SPEAKER: Where's that to on the Order Paper?

J. WALL: Motion 5.

SPEAKER: Yes, okay.

It has been moved and seconded that, pursuant to Standing Order 11(1), the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May 25.

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.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. 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 on Ways and Means to consider a resolution relating to the raising of loans by the province and related bill, Bill 15.

SPEAKER: I'm trying to find it here on my Order Paper.

AN HON. MEMBER: Motion 3.

SPEAKER: Motion 3.

Thank you.

It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider Bill 15.

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 has been 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 15, An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province.

A bill, "An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province." (Bill 15)

Resolution

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

"That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$3,900,000,000."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

It is my pleasure to stand today to speak to the loan bill for the 2026-27 fiscal year. *Budget 2026* was tabled in the House of Assembly on April 29 and outlined a total borrowing program for requirement of \$3.9 billion for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027. The borrowing plan reflects the province's expected financial needs over the coming year, including both refinancing existing obligations and supporting new expenditures.

Under the authority of the *Loan Act, 2026*, together with section 38 of the *Financial Administration Act*, the provincial government is authorized to raise up to \$3.9 billion through borrowing. This legislative authority sets a clear cap on how much can be borrowed and ensures that all borrowing activities are carried out within an approved legal framework.

The *Loan Act, 2026*, will remain in effect until we have reached this \$3.9-billion limit, or until it is replaced by a subsequent loan act. This provides flexibility to manage borrowing across the fiscal year while

maintaining appropriate legislative oversight.

By comparison, the previous *Loan Act, 2025*, authorized up to \$4.1 billion in long-term borrowing. As of March 31, 2026, the province had fully utilized that authority borrowing the entire \$4.1 billion. This demonstrates the ongoing reliance on borrowing as a key tool in managing Newfoundland and Labrador's finances.

The *Financial Administration Act* allows us to borrow not only for new spending but also for important financial obligations such as refinancing mature debt, contributing to sinking funds and addressing unfunded pension liabilities, however, specific long-term borrowing authority must still be granted through legislation such as the *Loan Act, 2026*, in order to meet the financial requirements set out in our *Budget 2026*.

Of the \$3.9 billion in planned borrowing for this fiscal year, approximately \$0.5 billion, \$500 million, is attended to address debt that matures early in the following fiscal year. That would be the first quarter of '27-'28. The remaining \$3.4 billion supports a range of critical priorities. These include approximately \$1.1 billion for infrastructure investments throughout the province as well as nearly \$800 million to meet required payments on Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services line of credit.

Additional commitments include \$300 million in payments related to promissory notes for public sector pension plans, \$200 million for borrowing and refinancing on behalf of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and \$200 million for sinking fund contributions. The remaining \$700 million is needed to finance the projected deficit for the '26-'27 fiscal year.

Borrowing at this level is necessary to ensure that we can meet our day-to-day financial obligations while also maintaining sufficient liquidity. Having adequate cash

reserves on hand is critical for managing debt repayments as they come due and for maintaining overall financial stability.

In terms of how the province raises these funds, we have to access a broad set of borrowing tools. We can issue both fixed- and floating-rate debt domestically across a variety of maturities. Traditionally, the province has relied most heavily on domestic fixed-rate term debt typically issued with maturities of 5, 10 or 30 years. In addition, short-term borrowing plays an important role in cash management with 91-day Treasury bills and other short-term instruments issued on a regular basis as needed.

Every Wednesday, \$90 million turned over in Treasury bills – every Wednesday.

More recently, we have expanded access to international markets through the establishment of a European medium-term note program in the '22-'23 fiscal year. To date, approximately \$533 million has been raised through this program providing additional diversification in funding sources.

The province's debt is held by a diverse group of investors including insurance companies, pension funds, corporations, as well as governments and government agencies. This broad investor base helps support stable access to capital.

From a cost perspective, the average yield on debt maturing in '26-'27 is projected at 3 per cent, which represents an improvement compared to the 3.69 per cent average in '25-'26. However, overall debt expenses are still expected to rise slightly, reaching \$1.2 billion in '26-'27, up from \$1.1 billion the previous year. This reflects the overall size of our debt portfolio.

Looking at the broader fiscal picture, net debt is projected to increase from \$20.8 billion in '26-'27, up from an estimated \$19.4 billion in '25-'26. Despite this increase, net debt as a percentage of GDP is expected to

improve modestly, declining to 43.5 per cent from 44.8 per cent.

This indicates that while debt levels are rising in absolute terms, the province's economy is growing at a pace that helps stabilize the relative debt burden. Of course, as a government, we are committed to spending smarter and planning efficiently to ensure that we make positive progress in addressing the province's debt.

Speaker, there is optimism on the horizon. With our tremendous riches of natural resources and progress being made on projects like Bay du Nord and the development of the Churchill Falls and Gull Island, we will see a future where Newfoundland and Labrador is in a much, much better fiscal position.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I'm not going to speak too long about this bill. For anyone watching, this isn't a policy initiative, this allows the government to borrow money, which is obviously very important. I think one very interesting piece about that, that came to mind recently, is it speaks to the importance of our democratic institutions in Canada. For example, the Legislature that we're all in now and the 40 of us, we're here and we vote on things and we change laws. The only reason why a company, for example, or a bank, will loan us \$4.4 billion or \$3.9 billion is because of these democratic institutions, Chair.

I think that's an incredibly important part of our Legislature. It's important to keep that in mind. As a province, we are able to borrow \$3.9 billion because of our democratic institutions. I think that's very important and that we don't forget about that.

I do want to also note, I believe the minister mentioned, total borrowing is \$4.4 billion. They've already borrowed the \$500 million so this is another \$3.9 billion. I guess, in summary, I just want to plead with the Minister of Finance and the government that we would recommend that the government move forward quickly on a Churchill Falls deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. STOODLEY: Chair, there's a noise that keeps bothering me, sorry. I'm not –

CHAIR: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't pick that up.

S. STOODLEY: Oh, no, no. It's okay.

CHAIR: Okay.

S. STOODLEY: The noise has stopped. Thank you, Chair.

I note that the Minister of Finance indicated that they had already spent \$500 million and the total borrowing is \$4.4 billion and I do – this is where I left off – want to implore the government and the Minister of Finance that they should get a Churchill Falls deal. I sincerely wish that they get a deal that is the same or better.

I don't agree with the categorization that the government is making of the Churchill Falls deal. As we dive into the specifics, I do hope they're able to get a deal in short order for the province's finances. Obviously, we can't keep borrowing these large amounts of money. We need a long-term solution and I do wish the government best wishes in that, Chair.

We will be supporting this bill.

Thank you.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate any opportunity I get to stand in this House of Assembly, as you know.

Bill 15, An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by way of Loan by the Province, I'm not going to speak for very long on it. I do have couple of points I'd like to talk about. We've had some great discussions so far through the budget process and we're going to have some more, I understand, tonight and in the next couple of days.

As my colleague had said, we will be supporting this piece of legislation. It's a must do. We have significant civil servants that do significant work in this province each and every day. I thank them for their great work, whether it be servicing our roads or our hospitals or our child care centres and places like that. I think it's really incumbent upon us, as legislators, to give them the resources and this is one of those must do's that we have to do as a House of Assembly.

I do highlight the fact that we would like this borrowing to be less and less every year, there's no doubt about that. We had great conversations about sinking funds through the budget debate and the importance. I learned a little bit and I hope the Minister of Finance learned a little bit by explaining it to me as well and answering some of my questions. But I see them as an important piece on how we get ahead of debt that we have in this province and tying a sinking fund to those things, the debt that we have in this province, is a good thing. If we had been doing it since 1949, we'd be in a much better spot as a province. I think we all can agree on that.

We're seeing great interest rates on sinking funds now, over 8 per cent. We are borrowing that money to put it against it, but, at the end of the day, we're doing that at a 3.7-ish rate and we're being able to net increase value with respect to those sinking funds.

I would be remiss if I didn't take this minute or so to talk about how we may agree on

sinking funds, but we do disagree on the Future Fund. I think those two things can be done simultaneously. I think it's important. I think many of the financial institutions that we both have had extensive experience listening to and hearing from would agree that investments in both of those areas would be investments in the future of the province and all the little kiddos that we have running around in this province, their future as well.

There are good things, as we've mentioned, in the budget. There is no doubt about that. There is more that can be done.

This being Early Childhood Educators Week, I'd like to take this opportunity to say that's one of the areas in the budget that I think we could have had a little bit more of a focus on. As the hon. Minister of Education has said many, many times, they are our most precious resource and I agree with him on that.

P. DINN: Precious and valuable.

B. DAVIS: A precious and valuable resource, for sure. I think there's an opportunity for us in the budget, and very quick, in short order, to try to work with those early childhood educators that are requesting things that are understandable that would make the system better for them, as well as our young people, as the most valuable resource that we have in this province.

I think the clarity that we need on that is to move quicker. They've made it very clear what their requests are. I understand that we've established a committee, which is not a bad thing. I'm not standing here and saying that's a bad thing. But I am saying that they've made it very clear what they need, what those educators would need.

This week would be a perfect week for the Minister of Education to stand on his feet here and say that we're going to give that to you because of what you do. I'm not trying

to paint him in a corner or anything like that, as much as he may think so, but I think this week would be a fine week to try to move on that. I'd even settle for just having the committee named as a good starting point to move quicker.

I'm not going to belabour this point. I think this is a great piece of legislation that we need to do as a province. I hope that every year we'll see that number go down a little bit. As my colleague from Mount Scio has said, there's no doubt in my mind it would have gone down had the MOU been signed at this point, but I am hopeful, based on what's been said, that we will get a deal at least equal to, if not better than, the one we had put on the books as an MOU – not a deal, but an MOU.

So I hope and pray for the future of this province that the government will deliver on the promise of the MOU and, hopefully, increase that transparency that we want with that so we know who's providing that advice. I think that's very important.

With that, Chair, I'll take my seat and be happy to support this piece of legislation.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

I, too, won't be long winded here in this, but I would like to just read it out. This is Bill 15, An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by way of Loan by the Province and the bill would authorize the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to raise money by way of loan to a maximum of \$3,900,000,000. I just wanted to make sure that was put out there.

Our caucus will be supporting this as well. This is perfunctory; this is almost a necessary evil that we have in our system right now about the loans, but I just would like to make a couple of mentions as the representative for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi that this truly represents an opportunity.

It indicates to us – again, with the budget we're all talking about affordability, but many of us talk about it from various vantage points – the opportunity to truly invest in more sustainable industries that will continue to bring us return for many, many, many years to come.

While I understand that this is something that is obviously necessary to the business of this House and it's an act to authorize the raising of the money, as I said, by the way of loan by the province, I certainly look forward to further conversations about how we can continue to reduce our debt, but our ability to thrive in a more sustainable kind of industry. That will impact, certainly, the finances with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just going to stand for a minute, also, and offer my support to this bill. It is, again, as we know, borrowing. I just want to mention some of the good things that are going to happen now and waiting until the full budget.

I'll give you a good example is the work that's going on with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing out on the West Coast. There are improvements being made already. There are units being built as we speak and this is a part of it, to continue on with that great work and the other instances where we're trying to help out with the people who are living in a hotel in Corner Brook with the wraparound services. Without these funds being approved here in this House, that couldn't happen and continue on from here on.

The other thing is health care. Health care, as we know, is the biggest issue in this province, in my view, right now. Without the

continuation of this fund, the work that needs to be done to the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital to create 45 beds, to alleviate the concerns that there are about 50 long-term care patients in acute-care beds in Corner Brook who need the proper services in long-term care beds, without the continuation of this fund, we will not be able to start to work now, to get those beds in place because there is so much work that needs to be done to the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital.

I've been advocating a lot for the extension of more beds in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital to help with the emergency department, to free up acute-care beds and get proper care to the seniors. So it would be kind of hypocritical if I stood up now and said, no, I'm against this so we can continue on with this work. This is the funds that we need in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to continue on with the work that's happening in government itself.

Just another point for the people of Humber - Bay of Islands that they're concerned about is the roads. This would stop all the possible road programs and all the work that needs to be done, paving on Route 450 and work to be done on the North Shore Route 440. This is a continuation.

It's great that everybody in this House is going to be voting for this. We understand the importance of it. We understand why we need the continuation of the services that are being provided now and the work that needs to be done in the future, because if there's one thing I'm going to continue on – and I have to recognize the Minister of Health and Community Services – there's one thing I can say about the minister is she's upfront and honest.

The idea of when the previous government put in 45 beds and everybody knew we needed 90 to 100. Everybody knew that but because of the amount of work that needed to be done on the Western Memorial

Regional Hospital, the old hospital, it wasn't done. The minister, to her credit – and I'll be speaking about this later because I'm hoping that I'll explain it more to the people of Western Newfoundland and especially the Corner Brook region on why there are no beds being built immediately now is because of the deterioration of the old building.

This is no reflection on anybody. It's an old building right now and the 45 beds that were put there before, were put in the best part of the section. One of the issues that was brought up – and the minister, again, arranged a briefing with the senior staff to explain to me and give me the briefing notes – is that the kitchen capacity for the Corner Brook Long Term Care facility and the hospital, with the 45 beds that were already established in the old Western, has reached its capacity. So to put another 45 patients in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital, long-term care patients, and put 45 more into acute-care beds where they should be, there's no capacity for provision of food. That's one of the things.

The roof needs to be done and there are other things in the building that has to be brought up to a certain standard to have done. These funds here will definitely help. These funds will definitely help continue on with this work.

I've just got to say that I'll be supporting this and with the work that is committed by the government for the issues that I've been bringing up for the Corner Brook, Humber - Bay of Islands area, they're in this budget. They're in this provision here and in the budget itself.

I can only say I support the government on the initiatives that they're taking, the two major issues health care and housing. They're being tackled in this bill and in the budget itself so it's something that I would have to support because that's the major issues that I heard throughout the election and since the election in October to the

present is the emergency department, the health care and housing in Western Newfoundland.

I'll take my seat, Mr. Chair. I will be voting for this here and I will be supporting this. I look forward to working with the ministers, which I have to say have been very open for having discussions with me on the issues in the Corner Brook, Bay of Islands area, and I look forward to continuing working with the government on the issues pertaining to Corner Brook and Western Newfoundland.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

I thank all those speakers who chimed in on the loan bill. Great job. I just want to highlight a few things before I sit down and conclude the bill.

The Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville slipped out the term sinking funds. I just want to state the sinking funds again, the significance. For the people at home, they're going to say we're borrowing \$3.9 billion and we're going to carry that with carrying charges each year. But the sinking fund has been increased by 1 per cent. That does not seem very much.

So instead of 1.5 per cent, it's 2.5 per cent. But for the people watching at home, the debt this year with that extra percentage on the sinking fund, which is over \$200 million that we're attaching to that debt, once we send out that debt in 30 years, in 23 years, that debt is paid off. Seven years early, that debt is paid off.

The question of the government of the day when that's paid off, while there's nothing permanent, our desire would be that that money then would be rolled over to any debt that's out there without a sinking fund.

We look at that as good debt management. It's too bad we didn't have 2.5 per cent before and started a little earlier.

So while it's not what we class to be a very exciting term, but these sinking funds are little munchkins that's going to destroy that debt over the period of 30 years, like little PAC-MAN that the Deputy House Leader used to – right? Years ago, when he played those little PAC-MAN, that's destroying the debt. So it's a good thing.

Remember, the line of credit that we are borrowing for, \$800 million, I just want to circle back for those people at home. This was a line of credit that NLHS built up over the previous government, maxed out. They were carrying \$20 million a year in interest charges on that. We are borrowing to pay it off, put them back to zero on a line of credit with oversight. We are borrowing that.

I know the Member is asking and wondering about the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro debt. In Consolidated Funds and Finance people asked about that. That was the question that was asked and I know that he's wondering.

We borrow for Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro because we get a cheaper rate. We can borrow money cheaper but not an extra dollar of cost we would have to pay for borrowing for Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro will pay us any administrative costs and with the lower interest, we can access money much more financially better than what they could.

So for those people at home that wonder about that component, we are just borrowing. It inflates our debt. We raised the sinking funds, but we've got a \$700-million deficit forecasted. If we borrowed for the Future Fund, it would be over \$900 million we would have to borrow. We are back to borrowing for the Future Fund. We are going to do it when we get in a cash surplus position.

The Member for Mount Scio, she claimed that it's a democratic institution, that's why the investors borrow. She is correct, we are, but there are some other factors as well. We have a very strong economy. Remember, we said 5.5 per cent on the GDP; the next closest, PEI, 2 per cent. The other thing is our debt load. We know the more debt you acquire the less attractive borrowing is going to be for those lending. We have to make sure we get our deficit down, borrow less, use sinking funds to pay off outstanding debt and reduce that debt we've got.

The other thing is, we have the federal government. We are a province in the Federation of Canada, which investors look at and say we've got the federal government as well with us.

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands mentioned about the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and the initiatives that were ongoing – wonderful. He also mentioned about our Health Minister and health care on the West Coast and he mentioned about her being passionate. Well, she is indeed passionate, very passionate, very committed and I would think that we ought to see some good things in improving health care under her leadership within that department.

I would thank all Members who spoke on this bill. It was a pleasure to bring it to the House. We need to reduce our borrowing and that is part of our economic plan going forward.

Thank you very much, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against.

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province." (Bill 15)

CLERK (Hawley George): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 6 inclusive.

CLERK: Shall clause 2 through 6 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 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 Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province. (Bill 15)

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 without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution of Bill 15 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 15.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against.

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Lane): The hon. Member for Placentia West - Bellevue and Deputy Speaker.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

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

When shall the report be received?

J. WALL: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

"That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$3,900,000,000."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a second time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

"That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$3,900,000,000."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province, Bill 15, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Deputy Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 15, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province," carried. (Bill 15)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province. (Bill 15)

On motion, Bill 15 read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of

Treasury Board, that Bill 15 be now read a second time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province. (Bill 15)

On motion, Bill 15 read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 15 be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 15 be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province. (Bill 15)

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 Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 15)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion 1.

SPEAKER: Motion 1.

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to rise to talk about the subamendment in our budget debate today. I think, if I can bring you back to the last time I spoke, I focused pretty much exclusively on my district and some of the key things that were happening in my district, not from a budget perspective, just on the treetops of the exciting people and the things they do and how happy I am to represent the district.

I'm not going to go in that direction today, although I could. There are consistently a significant amount of individuals, just like every district in this province, that do some interesting things that should be highlighted in this House of Assembly from time to time. I think every one of us could probably have a Member's statement every day, and I think that may be a better use of some time sometimes when the House is not in the best state of mind that we've seen from time to time.

I know the Finance Minister feverishly writes whenever someone on this side gets up to speak and is focused completely on that. I

will bring us back, I'll use a word he uses all the time, I'll harken us back to a time, and it's a homage to him.

There were three pillars in the PC blue book, which, in normal circumstances, doesn't necessarily always transfer into ministerial letters or ministerial reports for each department, but, in this case, it did. It's the first time I've seen that translate that way, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. It could be a good thing that the entirety of the blue book makes up the ministerial letters and ministerial direction for each of the departments.

They campaigned on lower taxes, better health care and safer communities. I think we've heard that. I think the other tag line they say all the time is: for all of us. I think our job, as Opposition, is to highlight where, maybe, they went wrong on those three pillars or not far enough, because I think we can say that they probably accomplished some of those three pillars in the budget, no doubt.

I guess we could say that the budget does reflect all of us. Not every piece and not every person in the province gets benefit from a budget, that's for sure, but I will say, if you look at an individual district to see how my district has benefited from the budget directly, I can point to a few things where there's some benefit. There's no doubt. We've talked about the Seniors' Benefit that will be increased; we talked about some things that would be beneficial, but I'm going to talk about some of the things that were missing. I think the hon. Finance Minister highlighted and alluded to some of that today when we were chatting earlier.

The other side of the House, the government, has talked about lowering taxes. Well, I guess if they're going to say that was successful, then they would be saying that they lowered the sugar tax. Not exactly what happened; they took the sugar tax from zero to zero, which I guess is

maintaining the same level. They didn't increase it, that's for sure. The tax on fuel went from 7.5 cents to 7.5 cents reduction, which is better than going up, that's for sure, and the fees for motor vehicle registration went from \$80 to \$80. I am happy that they did maintain those. I'm not going to go political with the previous government's cuts because those were cuts that were made that we were focused on.

One of the other things that I would like to talk about is how they came to their numbers. I think the Finance Minister has, on occasion, over the last couple of weeks, maybe month, talking about the budget, talked about some of the things that led into the budget, which is great. I've learned a bit from the Finance Minister based on those things.

One of the things I thought was really interesting was he said that the price per barrel of oil that they used in the budget – which every government has to do, because a significant portion of our revenue in this province comes from oil revenue, non-renewable oil revenue, we'll talk about that a little bit later too in my conversation.

I will tell the Finance Minister, I do still have another budget speech left and a speech in concurrence that I can go to, so I know how excited he is that he gets to hear that again. I can see him chomping at the bit for that. Maybe the Minister of Education is excited about it as well, he tends to be excited about what I have to say on the Education side.

But one thing about this \$72 that was selected –

AN HON. MEMBER: It's \$79.

B. DAVIS: Yes, \$79, sorry – is it's different than what some of those 11 forecasting experts had said they should pick, which is a difference of about \$6, I think, is the number that those 11 forecasters, who are very well experienced to take – we're going

to say that the province should do and what many other jurisdictions would follow.

We know that the volatility of the oil markets is changing. I'll give you a prime example of that. When I stood up to get ready to speak to this a couple of days ago, I did a search, a very quick search to see what Brent crude was trading at the day I was going to stand up and that's only a couple of days ago. I found it funny when I searched a few minutes ago that it was almost \$10 a barrel lower than it was two days ago or three days ago, when I was going to get up and speak on this before. That speaks to the volatility of the oil industry, there's no doubt.

I'm sure any one of us, if we could pick that with 100 per cent accuracy, we wouldn't be in this House of Assembly for sure. So, at the time, when it was \$110 to \$111 a barrel, I think it's trading at about \$98 US per barrel, Brent crude today. If that was the full year – and I know it's not always done for the full year, but we've been consistently now for the past, roughly, since January, in excess of where we budgeted for. I think the Finance Minister can agree with that. It could be \$20 here, \$15, \$30 depending on where we're to.

If it had stayed at the \$110 to \$111 for the full fiscal year, from April 1 to March 31, that would equate to somewhere close to \$800 million, because for every dollar that there's a difference between what you budgeted and what it trades for, is a little over \$20 million. I always say about \$21 million. That's what Finance Ministers have told me, but it is contingent upon a few different things. Obviously, exchange rate and the price per barrel, of course, and amount of quantity that's being pumped out of the ground, all those factors, all being equal, it should be around \$20 million to \$21 million.

With that said, even at \$98, it's about \$546 million bigger than budget. I'd like the public to understand that by setting the price at \$6 less than what even the forecasters have said, which was still lower than what the

market is bearing out right now in front of us, there's going to be a significant – I don't like to use the word windfall, but I know my colleagues both from St. John's Centre and St. John's East have said that before and I will echo that it would be a significant amount of money, definitely a minimum of \$500 million if they stay true at about \$98 a barrel but it could go as high as a billion dollars, almost – close to a billion.

I know that we can pivot to talk about a few other things, but that could go a long way into a significant investment into the Future Fund and sinking funds. I'm not opposed to the Finance Minister's view on sinking funds, I agree. I think we've got to move in that direction, too, but we can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can and we have and we will in the future of this province.

I think the public wants us to. I think everyone in the public would say to us that, yes, we should be taking that non-renewable resource revenue that's not going to be here for future generations, we know that for sure. It may be 40 years from now, maybe 35 years from now, could be 60 years from now, but the world is going to transition from fossil fuels because there will be none of it left. That's just the nature of what we're dealing with, with non-renewable resources.

So we should take a little piece of that money and input into a Future Fund for future generations. Other jurisdictions – I'm not going to go through them again because I have done that and I may do that in my second go-through in the next couple of days, but there have been other jurisdictions that seen significant windfalls in there and it helps them weather the storm, whether it's Alberta or Norway. They've seen significant increases and those, just for clarity sake, didn't start up all that long ago, either, in relative terms to governance.

I do get where the Finance Minister is talking about sinking funds. I think that's a

great investment. I also think borrowing money for a Future Fund is there and that's where we disagree, but the likelihood of us, hopefully, turning into a have province, again, where we're taking in more revenue, will come when we sign an MOU and a deal with Hydro-Québec. I encourage the hon. Members on the other side to work as diligently as they can to do that.

Hopefully, it'll be at least similar, if not better than, the deal that we had with the MOU. I say deal with the MOU because that's what it is, it's a deal with a memorandum of understanding that was signed by the previous government to put money into the coffers. There's going to be a long road to definitive agreements, which we knew there would be some work done and there would be movement in what the MOU wants. I think the Leader of the Opposition has said, the former premier, that was the riverbanks and it's true. It's the riverbanks. It sets the parameters on where we're going to go and how we're going to get there but not necessarily the full path, right? I think that's an important piece.

I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to talk a little bit about health care. I know the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure is doing as hard as he can to try to update the venues and the roadwork and all those things, but what I can say is that people who reach out to me from Virginia Waters – Pleasantville, and everywhere in St. John's, for that matter, would love a new hospital. They don't really mind – I can't say don't care because my daughters get mad at me when I say don't care, but they don't mind where we would be to. At the end of the day, if it's not Kenmount Hill, I'm fine. If it's out in Galway, I'm fine. I just think we need a new hospital as a people in this province.

We don't have to look too far because we built one. We built one recently, 160 beds, I think it was and it cost them about \$750 million to \$800 million in Corner Brook. The one that we would be building for a

replacement for St. Clare's was not going to be a full complex like the Health Sciences. St. Clare's wasn't built in a day or in one build; it was built over time. So you build one tower at a cost of, you know, maybe \$1 million, maybe \$1.5 million, maybe \$2 million. The numbers that are being thrown around of \$10 billion to \$14 billion is if you build a complex like the Health Sciences or build a full complex like St. Clare's. We're talking about a state-of-the-art hospital that will be built in stages.

I listened to the hon. Member, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, when he spoke. He talked very eloquently, as eloquent as he can, about the years that St. Clare's was being built. It was built in 1939. It was again retrofitted a bit and built onto in 1962 and then 1972 again. So it didn't happen all overnight, it didn't happen all in one build, it happened over stages. So that's what I'd suggest would be an important piece.

But the key piece I think that people don't talk about enough, about the location of where it was to, was it opens up about 5,000 homes, I think, that could be built in both Paradise, Mount Pearl and St. John's because that's where they all meet, which is a very good benefit.

I don't know if many people are familiar with a 190 contour, but it's where water flows by gravity, of course, for feeding houses. That's a problem when you're up on a high elevation like Galway and like Kenmount Terrace. They're higher. Airport Heights is a similar problem, that you have to have water towers. A water tower to feed that kind of development would be big. Generally, the municipalities have trouble partnering together to build that because you don't know when it's going to be built. It's going to be a big-ticket item.

So I think this is going to be an opportunity for the municipalities to work very closely with government to deal with that piece, which would help solve a little bit of the

housing problem for the Minister of Housing. I think they would appreciate that. I know the young people that live in my district looking for housing would appreciate those as well.

But in addition to that, that's a good piece as well, but if you just didn't have that, we've got more, Minister, we've got more, there was going to be an exchange for moving traffic out of a very problematic Paradise area for moving traffic in and out of. This was going to open up the back end of Paradise to allow it to get onto the Outer Ring Road, take some pressure off Topsail Road and Kenmount Road itself. So that would have been a very positive investment. So I think we've got to look at some of those things.

One of the other things I'd like to touch on is, I think someone earlier today said that there were no gaps in the budget or there was nothing – I can't remember the context, but there were very few people against the budget. I would argue that that's not entirely factual. There are a couple of facts, like the NLTA said there was significant gaps in the budget with respect to education. They were disappointed that there was no increase to the allocations for school counsellors, instructional resource teachers, school psychologists, speech-language pathologists or other specialized supports.

We all know how important those investments are to our most valuable resource and to the teachers that do that valuable work. I know the Finance Minister cares about teachers, he was one. I know the Member for St. John's Centre was a teacher. I know the Member for Burin - Grand Bank was a teacher, a former educators. There are probably some others that have done some work in that field as well, but they understand how important it is to put more resources into the classroom, put more resources into support that classroom. I think that's an issue that needed to be reflected in the budget a little bit more.

MUNFA president said, "the budget does not close the gap on ensuring students can get the courses and supports they need to succeed." I've met with MUNFA on a couple of occasions and they're very strong on this point. It's true. There's a significant amount of opportunity that was missed in the budget to do some of the things that were promised in the blue book, in the ministerial letters, as they call them.

I'd be remiss if didn't say, being Early Childhood Educators Week, that there was a big miss in there. I know that it's not easy. I know, I held that chair for a little bit of time; I know it's not easy. There is a significant amount of push and pull in every department that every minister sits in – every one of them. I don't envy the job that you have to do with the limited resources that this province has, but it's all about choices.

I think George Jones sang a song about choices, was it? Is it George Jones?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. DAVIS: Yes. So we all know that there are choices, and it's about making those choices in a timely fashion.

I think the Minister of Forestry is getting ready to sing it for us. He was getting ready over there. I was excited. I was going to sit down and give him an opportunity to sing it.

But there are three things that the ECEs – and the valuable work they do – were very clear in. They wanted an increase in wages, fixing the wage grid past 2026, which is where we left it at the time. We were in negotiations to do something with that; pensions, I think that's an important piece, and my colleagues in the NDP caucus will agree and have mentioned this on numerous occasions; and sick days. Those are the three things that they prioritized. I think moving on any of those three would be very beneficial to the ECEs.

It's a hard try for them to recruit under the current circumstances. So that's a challenge.

I'll put my other hat on that I used to wear, minister responsible for WorkplaceNL, and the Federation of Labour has spoke, as the former Labour minister, and said, the budget is woefully inadequate on worker safety. Worker safety, of our 11 budget recommendations on worker safety, none were enacted.

Now, that's coming from the Federation of Labour. I've met with them on numerous occasions. They are very measured in their approach for how they want to support workers. I know everything can't be done at the one time, I know that. I know there are a significant number of things that are being done, no doubt, I know that. I can appreciate the minister responsible for it because when those recommendations come forward, they're hard on a department because there is a cost associated with each and every one of them. As Labour Minister, you have to balance the wants and needs of the employees and the wants and needs of the employers. That's your job. It's unfortunate that you can't come down on one side versus the other, it's a challenge.

When you meet with the Federation of Labour, they understand it, too. They really understand that the minister is trying to thread a needle because you can't be seen as being one sided versus the other. The Labour Minister has to be unbiased. Those are some of the things that we struggle with.

But the good thing about it is the health of the fund. The health of the fund at WorkplaceNL is very strong and that's taken a lot of subsequent work, back in 2015 and before, to make the right changes to make that mix work. We've done a significant amount of investments whether it be for some of cancer coverage or others that are going to be beneficial to the workers and hasn't cost the employers as much as they

would have thought it would have. So that's where actuarials come in.

I'm going to get the opportunity to talk a little bit more about this, I hope, in subsequent opportunities. I know 20 minutes go very, very fast, Mr. Speaker. It is challenging to fit it all when you get there. I'm sure that the Finance Minister can't wait until I get my other opportunity to come up, could be even tonight.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity and I'll take my seat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

So to start, I just want to acknowledge the people of the great District of Placentia - St. Mary's. Some people are watching, my aunt watched the last time and she thoroughly enjoyed the House that day so we must have been behaving that day.

Speaker, I just want to talk about some of the things in the district to start that are causing some great frustration with the residents, the infrastructure, specifically the road infrastructure. Now, anyone whose been in this House with me for the last 10 years know that usually ever time I get up to speak, the first sentence that comes out of my mouth has to deal with road infrastructure. I've been talking about it in my sleep even at times.

I also want to talk about its connection to rural economic stability, the health care access, public safety, housing and addictions and government accountability. All issues that all 40 of us in this House of Assembly grapple with and deal with daily as Members of the House of Assembly.

But I want to speak about the realities facing the people of the District of Placentia - St.

Mary's. It's a large rural district. They have hard-working people, strong communities and an enormous economic and tourism potential, but people are frustrated because they feel forgotten by our new government. It could be because they're representative is a Liberal, very well.

They are watching the roads continue to deteriorate. There was a plan in place. There was some roadwork being done each year. As the minister has said in the House of Assembly, there were significant dollars put into the District of Placentia - St. Mary's, and he is correct. There has been, but when we formed government, when I took over in 2015, it was in horrible, horrible condition. It was unreal. There was some work done on the Argentia Access, but apart from that, the majority of the roads were really, really poor.

We didn't know where to start. Where do you start when millions and millions of dollars is needed to bring it up to standard. So we did. We started on the busiest roads and the ones that the engineers in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure scored or indicated were some of the worst. That is where government started. That is why Salmonier Line received work. That is why Argentia Access received work and that is why a significant number of bridges were invested in.

Anyone on my side who has been a minister of Transportation and Infrastructure knows that when they come to me with a list or they say to me, this is what they're saying are the priorities and there are bridges on the top. I always say, I don't want bridges. I absolutely don't want bridges because constituents, they want pavement. They want the capacity to drive safely and comfortably over roads, over good infrastructure.

The other thing is you cannot grow rural economies if the people cannot safely access the communities. It's absolutely

impossible. It's impossible to expect people from the province who want a staycation because affordability is an issue, it's a concern, people no longer are doing the international travel as much as they used to, or want to, so they're using Airbnbs and they're travelling around the province. We have some beautiful sites, some beautiful spots to go and visit. I, myself, I've never been up to St. Anthony and I know there are tons of stuff up there to see. I can't wait to someday go up there and view it, but it's hard to do that when the road conditions are not good and the infrastructure's just not good.

In Placentia - St. Mary's, we have Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve which gets hundreds and hundreds of visitors. We have such tourism potential. We have the centre on the Salmonier Line. The traffic that goes through there is unreal.

Families are choosing local travel, as I said, because national travel is simply too expensive and people want to experience Newfoundland and Labrador. So I ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to work with the Minister of Tourism and to look at these places all throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and the accessibility to them.

Lack of cellular service creates another problem, but do you know what?

Technology has gone ahead of us.

Condolences to the family who – well, I've had four families lose loved ones in the last week under the age of 50, so my condolences to all of them, but one particular incident that was a tragedy, however, with technology now, when there was an accident, it activated the cellphone and the cellphone went directly to EMS. So that's great, technology is kind of getting ahead of government which is good but it's a sad situation. The lack of cellular service, the fact that there are no service stations and poor road conditions do not – do not create an inviting environment.

Speaker, government talks about tourism growth and they say we're going to be the best in Canada, but it's impossible to be the best in Canada if you can't access the sites. Tourism requires infrastructure investment and I say that to my colleagues across the way. Tourism will not continue, people will not travel on these roads that their vehicles are going to be damaged on, it's simple and plain. Like I said, businesses cannot grow where access is poor. Government cannot market rural Newfoundland as a tourism destination while allowing critical access roads to deteriorate, it can't be done.

Speaker, the crab fishery has historically supported many families throughout this province. I just want to say to the harvesters, I support you. I am 100 per cent behind you and I know you are having a very difficult start to this season. I really hope the season gets better, but the catch rates are down. In 3Ps the catch rates are really poor. I know there are significant barnacles on the crab and things are just not going good, and the cost of fuel and observer fees. I know, personally, our vessel, before she even left the dock, it was \$17,000 just for observer fees and a crab licence. There's such a cost associated with this industry, but there's money to be made, there's no denying that but there is a cost and this is not a great year. We're not starting out good.

Things like tourism and infrastructure investment will offset the economy and the uncertainty in the fishery. We also know that the fishery goes up and down. I mean, anyone who has been involved with this industry knows that. But when one sector struggles, government should be strengthening every other economic opportunity, not weakening them through neglect. Avoiding a problem because it's in a Liberal district is not going to solve our problems here. It's not a solution.

I just want to talk about the Irish Loop. The Irish Loop is a major tourism asset but the roads are deteriorating down there, too. It

connects into the District of Placentia - St. Mary's. We have a group now that's been meeting regularly and making some success in their plans to promote the Irish Loop as a whole. So you leave the Trans-Canada Highway, you go down Salmonier Line on through St. Vincent's and up the Southern Shore, but there's a part of the road there, between Peter's River and St. Shott's and Trepassey, that's not very good. The minister knows what I'm talking about, it really needs attention. I'm nearly certain that your engineers in the Department of Transportation have that road scored and highlighted as a very poor road. So you can't continue to wraparound the district and promote tourism if the roads are not fit there.

Communities are trying to grow the tourism industry themselves. They're doing it themselves. They're going to keep going. They're resilient. People are resilient and they're working together. People from the Southern Shore are working with people in the St. Mary's area. They are meeting constantly. I can't keep up with the activity. So they are working together. Government should be supporting that work, not holding it back.

Speaker, what message are we sending when we invite visitors to travel the Irish Loop but fail to provide the roads worthy of the experience?

I just want to move on to health care access and this is nothing new. We all know Newfoundland and Labrador is in a health care crisis and it's continuing to slide. It's not improving, which is a concern because government did campaign on improving health care access in Newfoundland and Labrador. We were trying. I mean, we were in agreements with nurse practitioners and we were trying to increase the access.

There are all kinds of incentives. All you have to do is go in on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's website for the Department of Health and Community

Services and you will see a lengthy list of incentives for all medical professions. So that was put in place. That's money and it's clear that money alone is not going to work here. Residents are struggling to access physicians. Nurse practitioners are proving to be effective and I say to the government of today: Please, please, please continue to recruit nurse practitioners.

My son himself is an individual with a disability and we had a very positive relationship with a nurse practitioner. We did have a physician. He lost his doctor and then he was assigned a doctor, but he's not someone that needs, normally – I should knock on wood here – a general practitioner, usually it's a specialist. So we hadn't used the general practitioner that he was assigned to, the family doctor. When I went looking for her because he had the flu, she no longer existed and I couldn't find her. So I had to go to a nurse practitioner and pay for that service at that time. Now, I didn't have any trouble getting in, but right now, it's a lot more difficult to access a nurse practitioner. So while the service is available, we need more.

Speaker, rural health care shortages are affecting seniors. Seniors can't wait in clinics for hours and hours and hours. They don't have the ability to do that. It is affecting persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups; persons with disabilities having to sit in a waiting room for five or six hours.

Last week, actually, I had people contact me with the Placentia clinic. The doctors there are absolutely fabulous and the nurses are great, but they had a significant number of emergencies within a 24-hour period and then the clinic was absolutely full of people from my district and from my colleague's District of Placentia West - Bellevue. People in that particular district are coming into Placentia. Now, that's something new.

People were having to wait eight hours – eight hours in a clinic, imagine, a clinic. I'm not talking about emergency where people are waiting 18 to 24 hours, I'm talking about a clinic where you have an appointment at 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning and you're there for eight hours and you still haven't seen the doctor. That is happening. I'm sure if you go back and speak to your constituents, they will tell you the exact same thing throughout rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's a concern of mine because with my child, as an individual – he's an adult now – with a disability, I went into the clinic, signed in for the appointment; he cannot wait. He can't handle the stimulation so we would go out to my mother's house, which is just two houses out from the clinic and wait and wait and wait. Usually you only waited like an hour, maybe two hours and you were in, so we just brought him back in, but to have to wait like eight hours, that doesn't work for vulnerable populations. It certainly doesn't work for people who have mental health crisis and issues and concerns.

Crime and policing, that's another pillar. I think it was last week, because I lose track of time in here, we meet with the RCMP and had a great meeting with the RCMP, I must say. It was perfect timing for me because, last week I believe or the week before, in Dunville we had an armed robbery at 2 o'clock or in the middle of the day in a place where there's VLT machines. One employee, who I doubt if she'll ever go back to work, individuals came in, armed with knives, held her up, got over \$6,000 and then they took off in the car. This is in the media. The RCMP responded, I must say I was really impressed with the RCMP's response, they located the car on the Salmonier Line. They shut down the Salmonier Line. The number of RCMP officers who responded to the Salmonier Line absolutely amazed me.

So I said to the officers, well, it's clear there are police officers, because the number who

responded to that incident on the Salmonier Line was absolutely – I was amazed by it. But what they told me was they have an emergency response team in place and when they have one incident like such in an area, they have capacity to respond, but had they had an incident in Cavendish, or an incident in Branch at the exact same time, there would have been a problem here. They would have been in trouble. They don't have the same – the force, everybody who was on the emergency response team responded to that incident.

Hopefully, I will never, as an MHA, have to face a situation where there are multiple incidents in my district at the same time, and we don't have the capacity to respond.

Community and businesses are being somewhat traumatized by what's happening in the economy. It's a problem. They're being traumatized by lack of policing support at a point in time. So when that armed robbery happened – who in this House of Assembly would expect an armed robbery in Dunville in the middle of the day? It never happened before – never – it never happened before. It's not something you would expect. Maybe, in St. John's, but you just certainly wouldn't expect it in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Also, these RCMP pursuits that happen, they create danger for the public. We had a pursuit here on the Salmonier Line; it shut down the Salmonier Line. People were blocked up, cars were backed up for hours, but that creates danger in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It's not a good scene. It's not a good sight. Like it said, the rural policing, their resources can be stretched.

On this particular day, and I have to applaud them again, they responded with vigour and they responded with numbers, simply because there was no other incident within the perimeter of my district or my colleagues' districts nearby.

Crime is tied to drugs and addictions and it is impacting every rural community in Newfoundland and Labrador. There's not one of us here that can say that we don't have a community that's impacted by drugs, not one. These are incidents that are leaving lasting impacts on employees' families and entire communities.

That brings me to governing is losing control of housing and addiction issues. This is a slippery slope. This is not something that just happened overnight. It seems like the speed of it is just increasing dramatically. I spoke to the minister about this, but just recently – I'm the critic for Housing – I did a drive-by some of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units here in the City of St. John's because I really just wanted to see if for myself.

I had people calling me and they were saying – they just recently found out I guess it's where I stood here in the House and asked some questions on trap houses and recently realized that I'm the critic for Housing, so now they're reaching out to me. I've worked in community for years so people actually know me from a previous life. They're reaching out to me and they're coming to me with addresses and exact addresses of houses and saying this is what's happening here.

It got to the point where I said, do you know what? I'm going to get in the car and go by these houses myself and just have a look. I have to applaud residents in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. The majority of them keep the houses absolutely meticulous.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: They do. They do. I must say.

When I drove by some these houses, I said, oh my God, this house is really neat and tidy and there's no activity going on. But there was one particular one that I did drive by and I actually witnessed some activity

happening at the time. So I did contact the minister and he did come back and say they were looking into it, but it concerned me because I wouldn't want to be the person living next door to what was happening in that unit. I absolutely wouldn't and I'm sure none of us would.

They're getting woken up in the middle of the night and you have to go to work. There's constant activity. If you have children, you're not going to let them out to play. There are just so many things that impact people's quality of life when there is illegal activity going on in a residence.

This brings me to 106 Airport Road. I have a few minutes left here. I'm going on the record and I'm going to continuously go on the record saying my thing with Horizons at 106 Airport Road is that I support wraparound services. The Minister of Finance in Estimates has continuously spoke about the admin costs.

When you have a number of people that are receiving wraparound services in the same physical location, the actual admin cost is lower. So if our solution is to take these individuals and put them out into different areas of this city or province to provide supports, the cost is going to go nowhere but up, up, up, up, up. I am worried about that. I'm worried about what is going to happen in January 2027, as it pertains to wraparound supports and services for individuals that are extremely vulnerable and are receiving care today at 106 Airport Road and those who could be or would be receiving care into the future.

Now, my time is almost gone so I just want to put on the record, as the critic also for Women and Gender Equality, groups are reaching out to me. I'm a little bit concerned. I've heard the minister talk about gender-based violence, but what I want to say is intimate partner violence is what I'm asking about.

Gender-based violence is the broad term for violence or abuse directed at someone because of their gender, gender identity or gender expression. When I speak about intimate partner violence, I'm more specific. It's referencing the abuse of an individual or the violence that happens to a person that's in a romantic relationship or an intimate relationship. That is what I'm talking about. I'm talking about intimate partner violence.

When I was the minister of the Department of Women and Gender Equality, community reached out to me. They asked for an advisory council or advisory group, which I've worked with before in other departments, minister of Seniors and when I was in Social Supports, it is today, when I was in that department, we had advisory councils for persons with disabilities. Community is asking for this government to form an advisory council to the department, to the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, to advise and work on intimate partner violence. That is their request. I'm putting it on the record here today; I told them I would and I am.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

M. KING: Thank you, Speaker.

It certainly is a pleasure to once again rise in the House and speak on the budget and to represent the good people of Burgeo - La Poile, of course. Those are the folks who voted me in here to represent them and I'm certainly putting my best foot forward in trying to get a lot of issues and concerns addressed in our district, to make sure we see those investments, to make sure we see those improvements to the people that we represent. Of course, not just the people who we represent when we're in Opposition or in any position in this House, but we're all trying to work together, work as

collaboratively as we can to improve the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I will say it's a new week again here in the House of Assembly and there's certainly another great night, I would say to some of my colleagues, to see the Montreal Canadiens playoff hockey continue, which is always – I know the Speaker is so glad to hear me say that as he always is. But it's just another great Monday here in the House, here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, to see our own Alex Newhook continue on a great path that he's on.

J. HOGAN: Go Hurricanes.

M. KING: I'd say to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that he should be cheering for the Montreal Canadiens as well, but he likes to poke a bit of fun to me and a number of my colleagues here, but all in good fun. All in good fun, Speaker.

But when we talk about the budget, and I've had a number of opportunities to get up and speak to the budget here in the House, I've talked about some more specific items in my district and building on some of the messages that have been indicated in the speech to the budget, I always do come back to my district, Speaker. It's certainly the most important to me to represent the people who I represent and their issues and concerns here in the House and to make sure that their voices are being heard by the government, to make sure their concerns are being addressed because, Speaker, they are the ones who are elected. They are the government now. They campaigned for the job, they got the job, it's now time for them to do the job.

We want to see those supports in place to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in different factors and in different departments and in different industries. That's why I've spoken I think earlier on in one of the other times that I had the opportunity to get up and how I feel that the

budget does miss a lot of opportunities for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We can certainly go through a lot of those from my perspective.

I heard the Minister of Finance mention earlier in the House that we talk about what is in the budget, but Members over here have also talked about what is in the budget, what is there in the budget. There are a couple of good things. Should there have been more? Absolutely.

We've mentioned the \$2 pay raise for self-managed home care workers. That's great. They appreciate that as well. They fully acknowledge that is a step in the right direction, but it is still not providing them equal pay for equal work. It is still leaving them behind, those who work for an agency. There could be a window where the agency workers get a raise. That's leaving them farther behind once again.

So to take real action on that matter, in my opinion, would have eliminated that gap, I should say, and have equal pay for equal work. That is so important to them. I know that it's something that I'll continue to bring up in this House of Assembly to make sure we see that positive change for those workers. They're so, so valuable to the health care system here and to providing supports to our seniors.

We look at other missed opportunities. We talk about roadwork in this province. I know the Minister of Transportation has heard from me a number of times today and this weekend and last week to look at issues on Route 480 right now. There are some significant concerns and it may be easy to say what about those potholes the last 10 years while the Liberal government was in place. I wasn't here, of course, but after a winter, those issues pop up again. They're not just 10 years of potholes that are appearing. There are some significant issues.

People rely on that route to access so many services. I've heard from so many constituents over the weekend, again today, last week, this is not just a highway, this is not just a road, this is the vital connection for them to get to other areas of our province to access medical services, to access food, additionally. There is a grocery store in Burgeo, but whatever services they need to access, this is the only way that they can get in and out of that area. It's not only just Burgeo; it's Ramea, it's Grey River, it's François. This is the route that they take. So providing safe access for them, providing the supports, the crew in place.

Now I do appreciate the minister and his staff responding and getting back to me about moving forward with some hot asphalt, making sure those issues are getting more permanently addressed. But we need to make sure we're taking care of those issues in the meantime as well because there are people travelling all hours of the night on that route, it's so important for them.

I hear from residents on Route 470 and other areas of my district, of course. I've mentioned here a number of times and I'll continue to bring that up because it's important to them, making sure those areas are addressed. It's vital connections to other areas of our province that they travel. Day in and day out, they use them every day to access so many services. So many of our seniors on our road, so many families on our road travelling back and forth to access those services. It's so important we provide safe and reliable roads to them.

When we hear comments of rightsizing the budget, to me that is a fancy term for a cut. Rightsizing a budget to me is a cut. It's a distraction term to use that it is a cut to the budget. So are we removing those investments to the rural areas, especially the ones that I represent? That is not what we want to see, Speaker. That is not what we want to see by this government.

We want to see those proper investments remain in place or improve to make sure that the rural communities of Newfoundland and Labrador are not left behind. I'm sure Members of the House have heard me say before, it is so easy probably for folks in the public service or in government or whoever – I don't mean this in a bad way, Speaker, at all – to forget my area because it's so far from the city. We hear that a lot of the time by folks in this province. I know it's not against them in a bad way, but we are 10 hours away by vehicle from the capital region. It's not as easy to just hop in your car and go 10 minutes and address the issue right away. There are a lot more people around the Avalon Peninsula. There are a lot more services available.

So making sure that we maintain and improve a lot of the services in the rural areas, to make sure that issues are being addressed is so important. So, so important because we know there are still a lot of those extra supports around. There are still a lot of those extra agencies or boards or groups in the capital city especially who are there to provide those supports when things may be missing. We don't have that as easily in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know a number of my colleagues here know that as well, not just on this side, but on the other side who represent many rural, different communities all across the province. So rightsizing the budget to me is a cut. We don't want to see that.

Then we look at 24-hour snow clearing. I heard from so many people in the Port aux Basques area specifically and, of course, all of my district on this issue. Port aux Basques, as I've mentioned before, is the gateway to this province. It is such a key access point to going to other places of this province and for a number of commercial vehicles that travel to the Avalon Peninsula as well to get the goods to the capital region. It is the beginning. It is where it starts when you come here to this province. It is so important that we're providing

infrastructure upgrades or supporting increase to the capacity for Marine Atlantic. That's the word I was looking for.

We know that's a federal government issue, but we want to make sure that our provincial government is there supporting the people along the way as well, because all those things happening, if we're all here supporting those increases, supporting capacity building, supporting infrastructure upgrades, it is better for the province. It is better for the province as a whole.

Our tourism season we've mentioned, having the extra capacity, having more people come to our province, having them have safe roads to travel on, having small businesses opening up and all the goods and services that they need to have available when they get here to the province. It is so important. We want to see those investments but we're just not seeing them.

When we think of health care, as well. Health care is talked about a lot out in my district; challenges with accessing special services. Of course, they have to travel to more urban areas to get those services. We're looking for primary care, especially. We're looking to make sure that we're supporting our family doctors, supporting our physicians, supporting our nurses, supporting every single individual who works in the health care system.

I want to thank them for all they do, especially, in Burgeo - La Poile. I know there are significant challenges there with recruitment, retention and making sure those supports are in place, but we need to make sure we're investing in those areas. We need to absolutely make sure that they are not left behind because when they are left behind, a significant portion of our province is left behind.

You've heard me mention a time or two – I may sound like a broken record to some people but it's so important for me to bring

this up, to bring this to the attention of the government because it is important to the people in my area – we want to make sure those investments are there that health care can be provided.

I've had a chat with the minister about this, previously, about our family physician having the support they need. A CT scanner that was previously budgeted for in Port aux Basques, we're hoping to see that fulfilled at some point in time in the future, hopefully, in the near future, to increase those services in our area, to increase the capacity for more people to come. We heard the minister talking about MRI investments in Labrador and that helped with recruitment and retention of health care workers. The CT scanner in Port aux Basques would do the same. That would significantly improve those opportunities for other folks to come and work in our beautiful area that we represent.

We want to see those investments in health care. We want to make sure that all of our folks working in it are supported and that the residents are getting access to the care that they need. I'm not sure if we're there yet, Speaker. I'm not sure if we're there in this budget.

We talk about education a lot and how we've heard from the NLTA. We've heard from teachers and other educators and those who work in our field that they missed the mark a little bit, that it's not there, the supports are not there to support them. I hear from folks in my community about extra supports in schools for our students to make sure that they have the supports they need.

We're hearing stories all the time in the media or on social media about parents and the difficulties of making sure their kids and students have the supports they need in our schools. We're just not seeing those investments in those areas. We're just not seeing enough to make sure that the system has what it needs.

We're hearing that, not just from us here, like I say, Speaker, we're hearing it from residents. We're hearing from those working in the field itself that they're not feeling like the investments are there.

Building on that, the early childhood educators, too, of course. I've had a chat with the minister about one recently in my district trying to navigate the system here to make sure that she can operate to the full degree that she needs to. In an area like Port aux Basques, we have a number of people who work shift work. We have a number of people working on Marine Atlantic; one of, if not, the biggest employers in the Port aux Basques area especially. We want to make sure people can go to work. We want to make sure people can contribute, but they need to have that access to child care. As I mentioned, it's shift work a lot of times.

We can't be putting up more obstacles. We need to be addressing the issue and helping those folks through the system instead of just putting them off and saying come back another time. We can't be doing that. We need to be sitting with them. We need to be addressing those issues to make sure that rural areas, especially, are getting the capacity they need in early childhood spaces and to make sure our educators have what they need to do their job to the best of their ability. We certainly need to provide more supports there for them. We've heard from them, they don't feel like it's enough and we want to make sure that those supports are there.

Speaker, you know, looking at the overall budget and, as I mention, there definitely are a couple of points in there that people can say are good. I've mentioned a couple of them already but, overall, we're certainly feeling like it's missing the opportunity to address a lot of the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and a lot the concerns that residents have.

It's been a very heated debate here a number of times this session, of course. We know the debate that has went on here and we talk about opportunities like the MOU, for example. We talk about opportunities for Bay du Nord. We talk about different industries in this province, to grow on those industries, our traditional industries, like the fishery. We're looking at industries like oil and gas as well. The MOU gets brought up a lot.

Speaker, in Opposition, it is our duty, it is our role to ask questions to the government and to hold them accountable. I know that we will continue to do that to the best of our ability, no matter how long we sit here, no matter how long the House is open, we'll continue to come back whenever and do that to the best of our ability. That's why we're asking a lot of questions about the MOU.

I just want to talk on that briefly while I have a little bit more time before I clue up. It's no question that this is so important for the province. We're talking billions and billions of dollars to the coffers of this province to help address a number of the issues that we continue to talk about in this province, and we want to see a transparent process. That's why we're asking questions about certain hirings and people being revealed in the media that we're not knowing about and these experts. We heard in Question Period today, talking about the experts who were involved.

I was a part of the technical briefing on the new report that came out. We know, we heard about 350 individuals who participated. We want to also know the stakeholders who were involved. It was indicated that there were a number of stakeholders and groups brought in to be a part of this process, to consult with the Independent Review Committee. That's what we want to know. We want to know which experts they're relying on. The Premier and this government, if they continue on making a deal, it's a significant

deal. It is a significant deal for this province, massive, massive implications, there's no question about that.

We want to know they're getting the best advice. We want to know they're talking to the right experts on this matter. It's extremely complicated, extremely, extremely complicated. I can't even admit that I understand it all. I fully do not understand it all. I need to read it once, twice, third over, ask questions to other folks that I know. We want to know that they're getting the best advice and that is why we will continue to ask those questions, to make sure that we know who is providing that advice, who are the experts that they speak of. We want to know that they're getting the best advice and we'll continue to do that.

Speaker, as I've mentioned, I've talked a number of times and I look forward to other opportunities to talk about other parts of my district that are important. We want to make sure that the government continues to focus on – and I will make sure the government continues to focus on – rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It is so important to the make up of our province. It is so important that we see it continue to improve and thrive, especially when we continue to talk about the tourism season that's coming up. It plays such a vital role in our province. But when they come for tourism season, what are they seeing? We want to make sure they have those safe roads to drive on. If they're driving on roads that are in poor condition with their trailers, with their trucks in tow, after one trip they may not come back because of the experience they had. So we need our government to be focused on those. It's a ripple effect from those issues.

We need to make sure that health care is there for our visitors who come here and our residents. We need to make sure that they know that those reliable services are there. We need to make sure we support continued growth in our small businesses,

especially in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. One new business opening up in Port aux Basques can make a significant difference. One new business during the summer months opening in Ramea or Burgeo makes an extreme difference.

I know I'm having conversations with the folks in Ramea now about their museum having some troubles with summer students, especially on the federal side which they applied for, but that small issue, to a lot of folks probably here in this House of Assembly, is significant to them. Those are the things that we can be focused on.

I say it a lot of times to my colleagues here in the House, one of the best parts of this job is hearing a constituent say: Thank you so much for helping me. Thank you so much for trying to help me. Giving back to our constituents, to me, is a very important role – is the most important role, in my opinion, of our job. Being here in the House of Assembly talking about all of the major issues and being a part of the decision-making for our province is also a significant part of that job. I think that's why we get heated sometimes. That's why the debate can get out of control sometimes. That's why there's a bit of heckling back and forth. We're talking about billions and billions of dollars for this province – billions of dollars. That is significant.

We're talking about charting the course for the future of this province. That's what we should be focused on, the future of this province; our students, making sure we're supporting our students; our seniors, making sure they get the supports that they need. They built this province. But how can we focus on the future when it feels like, a lot of times, we're stuck in reverse? The government is missing the opportunities to build for the future.

They talked a lot about it during the campaign, no denying it; I heard it a lot, but I'm not seeing those actions being taken in this budget. I'm not seeing those actions by

this government. I do not believe they are being as future-focused as they should because we need to focus on the future. We need to focus on the future of this province. I know my age group especially feels it, the pressures that they are being faced with on trying to build a future here in this province is significant – significant. We want to make sure that the government is there to support those folks and everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We hear it all the time: for all of us. I don't believe a lot of those decisions are for all of us. It's certainly not being felt entirely in my District of Burgeo - La Poile and it's certainly not being felt in a lot of areas of this province, as we hear from many residents and other folks here in the House of Assembly speak who represent different areas of this province.

Speaker, I want to thank you for the time that I've been allowed to speak to the budget. It's been quite an interesting process, as I've mentioned. I will continue to stand up here at every opportunity I get, no matter if it's budget or what bill is before the House, to represent the people of Burgeo - La Poile and to make sure that their issues are being brought to the forefront, make sure their issues are being heard by the government and to continue to advocate to the best of my ability to make sure their issues are being addressed.

I thank you very much, Speaker.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

It is my privilege to rise and stand for the residents of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi. I want to thank my colleagues that certainly have been bringing up some wonderful issues regarding the budget and perhaps some of the missed opportunities as we continue to have this debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

We need a little bit of a lull in the room.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

My colleague, the MHA for Burgeo - La Poile, I certainly value a lot of the comments that were made there. Of course, we serve very different districts, we're talking about a rural setting and, of course, I'm in St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, which is a highly concentrated area, the A1C district, which truly represents one of the highest per capita populations of cultural producers and people who are often working in the tourism industry as well within that particular district. Even though our needs probably are very different in some regards, the value system of our tourism, culture, arts and recreation portfolio are very similar in lots of ways. I'll certainly speak a little bit more about that as we go further.

Of course, tourism, culture, arts and recreation is something that I'm extremely passionate about, not only because of my own personal experience as a cultural producer in my former life, but also the fact that the people that I represent in the District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi is a very predominant group of people that I represent in that district.

When we talk about tourism, culture and arts and, of course, recreation from the vantage point of bringing recreational tourism to our doors, the societal and economic value of the tourism, culture, arts and recreation sector is enormous and we're certainly hearing some comments about that as we go forward. It represents a creative economy.

I can also reference my colleague, the MHA for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, who is a perfect point in case when we talk about the incredible success that the Fogo Island Shorefast foundation, Zita Cobb, has helped

create in collaboration with the community there, to create an incredible success story. She's a well-wanted and deserved individual in so many conferences about the success that she has brought in a rural community, in a rural space and has shown how this kind of economic development can truly be something that serves community, no matter if they're big or small in a really sustainable fashion.

What I would like to speak about is that interaction, that important integration between culture, arts, tourism and sustainability and how they're intrinsically connected and interrelated.

When we talk about a creative economy, of course, I'll talk a little bit about what we learned in our budget Estimates that Newfoundland and Labrador – we've fostered over half a million visitors to our province bringing in approximately \$1.4 billion, annually.

Just by comparison, I think it's really important to just talk about some of the other locations in the world that are very successful with their tourism trade. Comparatively, the tourism industry in Iceland brings in approximately \$4.5 billion with over 2.7 million visitors. That employs approximately 26,000 people. That's all despite the fact that they're almost four times smaller than the entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, not just the Island because Iceland, of course, as we know, is a very small island in the European Hemisphere. Actually, the entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – it is almost 4 times smaller. It's really quite astounding the success story that they have had in terms of tourism and the economic benefits. The stats defend themselves.

We have an opportunity, but, again, this budget is a missed opportunity because it's really kind of a status quo, let's just keep holding the fort, kind of, position for the government here.

When we look at the merit of a creative economy and how that impacts employment in the tourism sector. We have so many people who are working in the tourism industry and we know because we've been talking about cruise ships that are coming into our port in the Port of St. John's and Corner Brook. My colleague, the MHA, sees the cruise lines and stuff and the importance of that to the economy, bringing people. Sometimes it's only for just a little hit. They come in for a day or whatever but it's their taste of the place and oftentimes what it will do is create a scenario where people will want to return and come and spend, significantly, more time with their families or their friends and spread the word. That's exactly what we want to see happen.

Doing a little bit of research and digging here on this, and in my former role as deputy mayor for the City of St. John's, this was a lot of conversation that I had about the value of the creative economy, spending a lot of time and energy on how we need to support those workers, the people. Whether or not they're in the tourism industry, whether or not they're in the cultural industry, whether or not they're in the arts industry and, of course, supporting recreational events that come here that bring us a lot of money and, again, more people into the province that will appreciate the incredible things that we have to offer here. Our geographic location, our beautiful landscape and seascapes, all of the incredible history that we have, all of those things, it all compounds. Every time that we continue to encourage people here in one shape or another, it continues to grow.

One of the things that we certainly can look to when it comes to Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation is Vision 2026. In my short time as an elected Member for the House of Assembly, Vision 2026 is not something that I've heard talked about and this was, I guess, the culmination, the final year of this strategic plan that was laid out. I believe Minister Crocker and the former premier, Andrew Fury, were involved in penning this

vision. I think that there are really some wonderful things to draw upon and to continue to look at as we forge forwards in terms of strategic planning.

We have, certainly, sustainability of natural and cultural environments. I'm coming back to that sustainability component when we are talking about TCAR. "This pillar reinforces the need to focus on the sustainability of the province's high-value natural and cultural attractions as the foundation of experiences" That's what people want when they come to Newfoundland and Labrador. They don't want to just come in and do the standard kind of fare, they want experiences. They want to encounter people that are storytellers. They want to encounter history, the value of the unique art scene that resides in our province, in the City of St. John's.

I've had the great pleasure myself of experiencing all of that through Grenfell Campus of Memorial University in Corner Brook, as well. It's world-class artwork. It's world-class work that is being produced and, again, continues to attract.

Sustainability is a huge part of that conversation. So the outcomes of this pillar – it was Pillar 7, Sustainability of Natural and Culture Environment in Vision 2026 that works towards achieving the objectives of the pillar. "The tourism industry is a catalyst for celebrating, honouring and promoting Newfoundland and Labrador's natural and cultural environment." There it is. It's all together.

"Respecting people, place and culture" – we're talking a lot about respect today and how that's a really important pillar as we move forward, but also within our society, in our province – "there is sustainability of the province's natural beauty, biodiversity and cultural vibrancy."

Certainly, my colleague, the MHA for Burgeo - La Poile, knows better than

anybody, of course, with the conservation area that has been a part of debate for some time. These are the things that people want to experience. They want to experience the natural environment.

"Experiences that are most sought-after are those based on nature and wilderness, including the ocean, the coastline, wildlife and geology experiences, and local culture" which encompasses the festivals, the events, the arts, the local art, the culinary. We haven't talked about the incredible seafood industry and the incredible restaurants that we are seeing. Of course, with growing newcomer population we're seeing multi-cultural foods that we never had an experience of tasting or experiencing prior to a decade or two ago. We are seeing it, and not just in the City of St. John's, it's throughout the province that this is starting to grow.

But, again, Indigenous experiences, these are areas, of course, that we know are grand as well, you know the pow-wows that happen in the Miawpukek and people are interested in seeing the first people of the places that they travel to. The heritage, the lighthouses, it's just so many things to celebrate, honestly.

I want to just speak about the Vision 2026. I know that the minister certainly speaks to wanting to be the tourism capital of Canada and I want to support that. I want to applaud her for that initiative and for wanting to go down that road, but, of course, we're not going to see that. That's not going to happen unless we actually invest in the producers; invest in the industry; invest in the people that are going to actual draw the tourism.

It's not all about tourism either. Culture, of course, is not just about drawing people into the province, it's about our own cultural identity as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This is who we are. We are storytellers, we're musicians, we're dancers, we're performers and we're people who live

on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. What an incredible culture that we are so privileged to be living in.

We need to support it. We can't just float along and pretend that just giving the status quo or keeping the rates of support at the same level are going to attain anything. Zita Cobb from Fogo Island is probably somebody who knows better than anybody that in order to make money, you have to spend money, and that is investments in a commodity, in a culture, in something that's going to benefit everybody.

So I just refer back to Vision 2026, which, again, "established a regenerative tourism approach through which tourism development will be guided.... The approach draws on the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, which were developed as a blueprint and call to action for all nations to achieve a more sustainable future for the planet." Oh my gosh, it's exactly what we're talking about.

So not only do we get to enjoy the incredible, pristine, beautiful environment that we have out there and get to marry it with our cultural identity and the tourism industry, but we're also being better stewards of the planet because we know we are in a climate crisis. As we move further and further into continuing to support oil and gas industry, we're moving in the wrong direction. We need a job transition, a just transition for the workers of this province so that they can all have sustainable work for a very long time, and that includes the tourism industry. They're intrinsically connected.

"Newfoundland and Labrador's regenerative tourism approach ensures that stakeholders are constantly engaged in how the environment is evolving, understanding how changes impact the vision and environment, and implementing the adaptive strategies and tactics needed to responsibly support this sector.... Leading decision making in this way creates a living ecosystem that is always regenerating."

So conservation areas like we could have seen, certainly in the MHA's District of Burgeo - La Poile, these are some of the missed opportunities that we have because that would be such an incredible draw. That's not to say that there can't be a balance. There's always a conversation. But to not complete the assessment, to me, is like putting the cart before the horse. We need to go through the process and ensure that these kinds of spaces are going to be conserved so that everybody can enjoy it and we can always show it off to the world.

My question here that I want to put out there is that Vision 2026 was a good attempt there in order to try to marry together sustainability, our Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation sector, to bring it all together; now, what is the plan? Where is the plan from here? Do we have a strategy? Do we have a vision for TCAR and how we're going to continue to build upon sustainable industries that help us profit in the tourism sector as well? They're all intertwined. They're all deeply connected.

The other way that these are interconnected also is with Transportation and Infrastructure, as we have discussed on many occasions here. We have the separate departments but when we're talking about Transportation and Infrastructure, now we are embodying built infrastructure, built heritage. I've heard from some of my colleagues about the importance of making sure that the roads are driveable and safe for residents to access these spaces.

We also have a built heritage investment that we need to do. Sadly, \$150,000 a year for granting is not going to cut it. It is just not going to cut it. We cannot download the responsibility of maintaining these incredible historic buildings all throughout our province – and I have a lot of them within my District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi. We can't download that down to municipalities. They don't have the money. They don't have the

wherewithal. They don't have the capacity to deal with this.

As we can see, there are many, many historic buildings in my district, particularly, and right across the province that remain extremely vulnerable and unsupported and often fall to the demise of demolition by neglect. That's what happens over and over again; I've been watching it. That, again, cannot be the responsibility solely of the municipality because they have to work within a parameter where they have to have a balanced budget and we know how challenged they are financially in order to move things forward.

It's extremely important that we see a government that supports the important infrastructure that needs to have more funding. It needs to be better supported. It's so unfortunate when we see Heritage NL with their very limited budget that they have see one building after another come down because people can't afford to maintain them.

We know that every dollar invested by Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador leverages \$5.75 in private and additional government investment. We also know that it revitalizes heritage buildings. They retain the value better than other structures in times of economic downturn –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The conversations are loud. If you want to have a conversation, take it outside.

Thank you.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that.

Additionally, greenhouse gases are avoided when reusing older buildings. One of the conversations that we had on a regular basis was about keeping all of the

infrastructure, all of these old buildings out of the landfill, and how that can be a more sustainable practice as well.

Heritage preservation generates economic activity. To me, it really feels like the government is missing the boat on this particular issue. We have all of this heritage, we have all of these old spaces and people come here for the significant history that we have here, both in built heritage and otherwise, and we're just not seeing it. We're not seeing the support of this government. I think it's a missed opportunity and if we truly want to be the country's best and brightest across the country, then we need to put our money where our mouth is.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to take a few minutes today to speak on the MOU, the Churchill Falls negotiations that's happening. I just want it on the record because this is probably the last opportunity I'll have to put things on the record about this.

I want to start back when it came to the House. We did have people there, and there was one there, Mr. Mahoney from the Department of Justice, who was the legal counsel. I know and I heard it several times that the Member for St. John's Centre and myself, we voted for it. We did – we did.

But there's a crucial point there why we did it. The reason why we voted for it was because we worked with the minister of Mines and Energy at the time to set up an oversight committee. The oversight committee that we agreed to, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, the Member for Labrador City at the time, and the Leader of the Third Party, we agreed that we would sit down and come up with an oversight committee. The Liberal

government at the time agreed to the oversight committee.

Without the oversight committee, the vote was going to pass anyway. So I know when we got together, we said, well, what can we do to make this stronger? It's important for me to have on the record exactly what happened.

After the negotiations that we had with the government at the time – and the government approved it in this House, the mandate. I'll just read the mandate. The objectives are to provide reliable oversight on the progress of negotiations and to establish a direct and effective transparent communication channel to the public while protecting privileged, commercially sensitive, or other information that could impair government and Labrador positions in negotiations.

It says here – Responsibility: Assist Cabinet in ensuring accountability of any negotiators as well as Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro in meeting their mandates; and review and analyze the information provided by the negotiating team and/or Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and their independent advisory committee.

I know that maybe the Member for St. John's Centre got a few digs there about this but, just remember, the oversight committee worked. The Terms of Reference changed, and this is why the information from Mr. Wilson at the time became public.

Anybody here who wants to criticize the Member for St. John's Centre or myself for doing the job of ensuring that there's an oversight committee to bring out flaws, which happened, I'm willing to take, but we did it and it worked. Just get it straight that it worked.

I'm just going to read a few things on this here. May 3, the clerk of Executive Council at the time, the day she was leaving her job – it is in the email – going to another

position, she wrote a letter to the Consumer Advocate, Dennis Browne at the time. In that letter, it says here with the MOU and the definitive agreements, that was the mandate.

As you go on in the letter that was sent to Dennis Browne, the Consumer Advocate – and I have to put in there, the person, Mr. Michael Wilson, who had an issue with changing the Terms of Reference, was appointed by Cabinet. He wasn't someone that I picked out or they picked out; it was someone who was recommended by the Consumer Advocate that the Cabinet accepted that name.

So let's get it straight. When I hear his name being bantered around this House – and I know the man, when his name is being bantered around this House of Assembly as hand-picked or someone is against it, he was selected by the Liberal Cabinet at the time. Let's get it straight because when you're bantering this man's name around and then you're not given the full concept of what happened here, it is wrong. When the letter was written by the clerk on her last day, she had to be given direction to do it, yet no one wants to stand up and say who gave her direction because she did not do it at the time.

May 3 was when the new premier came in – May 3. I just want to connect the dots here. The legal counsel for the negotiating team was the one slated to go into the clerk of Executive Council. He knew what Mr. Wilson was asking for, the information he was asking for, to follow through on the mandate.

When the mandate changed, I phoned the former minister of Mines and Energy and I said, did you change that? He said I wasn't even in government, don't even know what you're talking about. So in between then, up to that point, that was changed. That was approved in this House of what to do with the oversight committee. I just want to put it on the record.

As I speak to it here: “The Panel will have access to those term sheets following the conclusion of the Negotiating Team’s substantive negotiations” That is not what we agreed to. Here they’re saying just once negotiations are done.

In the terms that I just read earlier, the objective is to reliable oversight of the progress of the negotiations – the progress, not the negotiations itself. So I want to make that quite clear that what we voted on at that time, myself – the only two here now – and the Member for St. John’s Centre, what we voted on was changed.

So if the Member for St. John’s Centre is still asking questions about this MOU, please understand that he worked with me to ensure that we had proper oversight. He wants to make it stronger, which he did before. I have to say working with him on this, we definitely provided what we were asked to do.

I’ll just go on again, Mr. Speaker: “The Panel will have access to those term sheets following the conclusion of the Negotiating Team’s substantive negotiations with Hydro-Quebec as part of its review of the progress to Definitive Agreements; however, any involvement in the Panel while those are being negotiated is out of scope.”

I just put it on for the record. The letter from Michael Wilson, back to that, there were 27 requests for information and some of them to Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro – 27. Do you know how many he got? He got 27. They were all in agreement to give him the information he was asking, to have proper oversight, and it’s right in his letter. Twenty-seven requests of information to look at it. He got the 27 agreements.

The question is, the person who was the legal counsel who was going to the clerk of the Executive Council, did he want to stop that? Did someone want to stop it? Someone had to want to stop Michael Wilson from asking for information. Who

was it? I asked before in this House, who was it?

I’ll tell you, when I – and the same with the Member for St. John’s Centre – put my reputation on the line, of standing up for something that’s so important for Newfoundland and Labrador, and it gets changed and people expect me to sit back and say, well, b’y, you didn’t do your work or you voted for it – we voted for it because we’ve made it stronger and it worked – it worked.

I will not take any criticism – I have taken none from the PCs, absolutely none. None from anybody from the Liberals giving me swipes about what I’m doing, because I did what I thought was best for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and I stand by it. I stand by it 100 per cent.

I can tell you, I will defend the Member for St. John’s Centre for the work that he put into this, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands and former Member for Lab West, I will defend them because that’s what we did with the best information we had to ensure that we’re going to secure the best deal we can for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I just want to put that on the record because everywhere I go back home, the MOU is brought up. I want to have it on this record in this House of Assembly and anybody can read my involvement of trying to get the best deal we can for Newfoundland and Labrador. I make no apologies to anybody for that, absolutely none.

I’ll just go on and read the letter from the former clerk. In our opinion, we feel that’s the best way forward. I asked the question – I have the letter here – who’s us? Who did the clerk put in there and say “our”? Who? I’d love to see the answers. Anybody who was part of the negotiating team or part of the government at the time, here’s an opportunity. Stand up and say it. Who is it?

This changed and what happened – I’m not finished with this yet but this changed and this, all of a sudden, became an election issue and then that caused such a stir in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and it was only later you get the information that it all changed.

So the question is, who? Who is us? Because I can guarantee you, I have been on this side, Opposition, I’ve been in government and I’ve been in Cabinet. The clerk of the Executive Council do not write a letter to an oversight committee approved by this House of Assembly without someone saying write the letter and giving input into the letter. Absolutely not, it just don’t happen.

The clerk, (a), don’t have the authority; (b), would not be involved with it; and (c), would never do it on her last day in that position, I can guarantee you that. Someone knew what information they were getting and wanted to put a stop to it. Because when you get 27 requests and you get 27 answers back on it, everything must be good. The group that were there, they gave it to them. They had no problem with it whatsoever.

So that has to be on the record, Mr. Speaker. Here’s the other part, and this is from the former clerk: “The language makes clear that nothing in the Term Sheets are legally binding and that they will not be ‘set in stone’ at any juncture in the negotiations. As such, they are not ‘new contracts and developments with Hydro-Québec’ as referred to in the Mandate. Those ‘new contracts’ will be the Definitive Agreements, which Cabinet expects the Panel to opine upon before it decides to enter them into a legally binding manner.” But the Terms of Reference set in this House to follow negotiations, not definitive agreements.

I’ve asked that question before and I’ll put it on the record again, who changed it and why? These are the letters everybody got.

They’re public documents; everybody got them.

I’ll just go on with what Michael Wilson said at the time, and this is his letter from May 12. Dennis Browne got this letter May 3, or typed up May 3 and sent it, where the Clerk said this is my last day. So this is not me making this up. This is her last day, and the exact time that it was sent on that day was 1:38:47, May 3. That was the election of the new premier of the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, from my understanding.

Then that says – again, I got to try to connect the dots – the deputy minister of Justice was the legal opinion on the committee. He was slated to go to the clerk of the Executive Council, and I have to ask, was there any thought there that he’s asking too many questions?

I dealt with the former deputy minister, who became clerk of Executive Council. I dealt with him before; we’ve dealt with him, I think there may be one other person here. I can tell you if he said something to me, I’ll have to check it out. I had dealings with him. I won’t get into it right now but it caused a lot of damage there for a while to the Liberal Party at the time, the way it went down. I personally dealt with him; I personally questioned him on stuff. I knew at the end of it, it was right. I won’t get into the details right now but I can assure you that the people who are listening that were in the Cabinet before with me knew how much I stood up to the things that he was saying, the information that he was providing. I knew it was wrong and I was proven right at the end of it.

If I’m questioned, I will get into it and explain exactly what happened. That’s why I wanted to make sure there was an oversight committee on this.

So I’ll just read Michael Wilson: “I verbally confirmed my understanding of the IOP scope with the GNL Legal Counsel....” He

was legal counsel sitting right there with the committee and he identified himself as the legal counsel. If I'm wrong, anybody who was here at the time – but that was my understanding when he introduced himself. So this is the same person who gave him the information prior to when he became clerk of Executive Council or slated to become clerk of Executive Council, it changed.

Did he have anything to do with it? I don't know but I'm just connecting the dots here. I'm connecting the dots because someone changed it. When you say "we" feel – who's "we"? I still haven't got the answer.

"... prior to executing my contract. My understanding was the IOP scope would begin with ensuring accountability of negotiators in meeting their mandates, reviewing the legal, technical, and commercial terms of the MOU and overseeing progress towards definitive agreements." This is exactly what's in the Independent Churchill River Negotiation Oversight Panel Terms of Reference that was approved in this House of Assembly. That's what's in it. That's what we put in it to ensure that we would get proper oversight.

"The Clerk's interpretation of the Terms of Reference provided by way of a recent letter to the Chair of the IOP substitutes the term 'MOU' for the word 'mandate.'" So the words are substituted. This is in his letter. When you substitute those words, you change the Terms of Reference. I have to say, again, the Terms of Reference were voted on in this House of Assembly.

So myself and the Member for St. John's Centre, we stood and voted for that, we assumed that the oversight committee would follow through and be able to execute the duties with the Terms of Reference, not change it. That's exactly what happened. It was changed.

I can tell you as a person who wants to do the best for Newfoundland and Labrador,

who feels over the years I've made a contribution to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and especially the people of Humber - Bay of Islands, we want to ensure that we're doing the best.

So I am going to, again, talk about my colleague there, the Member for St. John's Centre. When it's thrown across the way: you voted for it. He did. So did I. We voted for it because we knew we had an oversight committee and we assumed, at the time, that the oversight committee was going to not be hindered one way, not have a change either way whatsoever, that they would provide a report, the oversight committee, from the beginning when they were appointed, to the end when they made their final submission to Cabinet.

That's what we did, and I'm proud of what we did. I am actually proud of what we did. It panned out that with this situation with Michael Wilson, with saying that this changed, it changed the whole texture of the election and new information came out.

I heard her talking about the 2 per cent escalator clause. I know the Premier of the province was put up. It was in the agreement. The Leader of the Opposition was saying to him, it was in the agreement, you should have read it.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, and anybody can go back and check *Hansard*, name once that the expert panel that was here and the professionals ever told us that they recommended not to put it in. It never happened. We did not know. The expert panel and the committee were not told that the government at the time said you shouldn't do this. That was never told to us – never. It only came out after the latest review. That never came out in this House that they were advised not to go with the 2 per cent escalator clause. It just didn't happen.

Mr. Speaker, I know I only got a minute left. I'm just going to read Michael Wilson:

“Based upon the Clerk’s interpretation, many of the IOP objectives and procedures would be out of scope therefore the related findings and conclusions could not facilitate a review of the MOU; form the basis of advice to Cabinet; or be included in my reports. My understanding of the mandate and responsibilities of the IOP at the time I executed my contract now appears to be mistaken.”

In the same letter: “I would not have executed my contract or agreed to serve as a member of the IOP if I had understood the Clerk’s interpretation of the mandate and responsibilities” be changed. That’s why he couldn’t understand. “... the Clerk made suggestions and assertions as to ‘how’ the IOP should undertake its oversight responsibilities. I do not believe it is appropriate” – and I do too, when the clerk is saying, here’s how you should to it. That’s interfering with the independent committee.

In my last seven seconds, I can tell you the clerk did not do that. Someone gave him direction.

Before I sit down, I just want to say to the Member for St. John's Centre, I’m glad I worked with you to get this done. At least we got the oversight committee.

SPEAKER: I remind the Member that his time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you, Speaker.

It’s always a pleasure to get up in this hon. House and speak. I’m going to talk a bit about the District of Waterford Valley. Given that I’m up against lunch, I’m sure the Members opposite and on my side are excited for me to sit down but here we go.

I want to talk a bit about Fort Amherst, first. Fort Amherst, as many people know, across the harbour there, a National Historic Site. This fortification was completed in 1777. As you all know, it’s at the mouth of the harbour. It was originally considered a tower and a gun battery. It was named after Colonel William Amherst which is where the name came from. It was recaptured from the French in 1762. Lots of history there.

Just a few feet from this lighthouse, there’s a 10.5-kilometre trail called Deadmans Bay Path. That’s not something from *Pirates of the Caribbean*, but this goes from Fort Amherst all the way up to Blackhead. I do plan on doing it this summer. I will say though, after doing Signal Hill last week and being sore for a few days, it could be challenging. Also, there’s another trail that’s worth mentioning from Cape Spear to the Fisheries Minister’s District of Ferryland. So a couple of great trails in the area.

Speaker, I can’t mention Fort Amherst without mentioning the late Mark Hiscock who grew up out in Fort Amherst.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. KORAB: Just recently, last week, we talked about the loss of another music icon in Fred Hutton.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: John.

J. KORAB: John Hutton.

F. HUTTON: I’m here.

J. KORAB: Sorry about that.

SPEAKER: Plus, I would have had to correct you anyhow because you can’t use the Member’s name in the House.

J. KORAB: That’s right. That was a mistake anyway, Speaker. Thank you.

SPEAKER: John Hutton on the other hand was a musical icon in the province.

J. KORAB: Yes, sorry. John Hutton.

Just over a year ago Mark passed away at the age of 53. Most people would know Mark Hiscock from the band Shanneyganock. That man could make a squeezebox talk. He was originally from Fort Amherst.

Back in 2002, Mark and his wife Kelly, they welcomed Dory the Doodle to their family. That was the name of the dog, and it was named after the Hiscock's song, "Fishing in a Dory," which is a great song.

The three of them travelled around the Island and Mark decided he wanted to write a book about Dory. That's what they started off doing. The book was nearly finished in May of 2025, but it was put on hold following Mark's passing. Kelly, his wife, was quoted in saying I just said, oh my gosh, I have to finish this book, and they did and it came out last month.

I want to add for the record as well that I did promise Mark's dad, Norm, that I would have coffee with him on his front step, as he overlooks Fort Amherst. It's a beautiful view of the narrows. I asked him when he has his first coffee and he said 5:30 and I told him I would meet him for his second cup of coffee, so I will do that this summer with Norm. So it's on the record now.

Most people associated with fishing with rural Newfoundland – and that is true, most of the Members are from a rural district and they're correct, it's a cornerstone of most of these communities, but I do want to mention, there is a lot of fish landed here in St. John's out on Fort Amherst on the southside.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. KORAB: One of the Members here just said, the most amount of fish. I can't confirm, but that's what I've been told in the past.

One thing I will also say about that area, I first moved to St. John's in 1999, when I'd get homesick, I would drive down to southside and go check out the boats. Being from Harbour Grace, that's where I grew up a lot was down on the wharf, jiggling off the wharf.

Talk a bit about Kilbride – similar to the fishery. I hear a lot of people talk about St. John's, the bigger city, capital city and that's all true. But in my district, Kilbride, that functions a lot like a rural area in a sense. It was actually started as the village of Kilbride and the Way Office established there in 1889 and St. John's annexed it in 1985. So it's very much still agriculturally based in its inception and there are still farms there today like Lester's Farm Market, Lester's Farm Chalet, Glenview Farm and Morry's Sheep Farm.

Just to tie it back into the budget, these farms have been impacted by the rising cost, but they were already behind the eight ball from last summer's dry season. They didn't get the yield of hay, which means they had to purchase more feed and that is drastically gone up, and I've heard north of 30 per cent in some areas.

The cost of fertilizer has also gone up, which they had the supplement, so Newfoundland farmers reported that nitrogen fertilizer prices doubled in some cases. Since fertilizer is essential for growing vegetables and feeding crops, many farmers faced a very large operating expense. As we know, labour has gone up right across the board.

We talk about farming. They've got a farm there for their crops so the fuel prices, we know where they've gone. One farmer reported that their feed activities rose by more than 50 per cent. There are things in the budget to help farmers and I will definitely acknowledge that but when you talk to farmers, they need more help.

We also, if you're going to talk farming, need to open up more land. I had one farmer in my district tell me they were turned down on an application, and they were looking to put livestock. So barring some environmental damage to the land, I'm not sure why we can't open up land for livestock. We need to do more there.

I can't talk about Kilbride without talking about Liam Hickey who lives there now. He is just back from the Paralympic Games. He's a two-time world champion, three-time Paralympic silver medallist in Milano Cortina. A lot of people don't realize, as well, that before he got into sledge hockey, Liam competed in wheelchair basketball and was actually at the 2015 Pan American Games and the 2016 Paralympics, so a multi-sport athlete there.

I know that the Minister of Education, the MHA for Mount Scio and MHA for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, who all represent Paradise, will certainly be watching Liam at the Para Cup which takes place in Paradise in 2026 at the Paradise Double Ice Complex.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. KORAB: I can't talk about Kilbride without mentioning the 50 Plus Club. They were here for Members' statements a few weeks back. It's run by the MHA for St. John's West's mom, Sharon. They have 70 people and they do avail of government grants, which are outlined in the budget.

Talking about my district, I've got to talk about Shea Heights, which was originally settled in the 1930s. It added to the metropolis of St. John's in the '60s. Shea Heights honestly is a great community; it's an amazing community. They're part of St. John's but it very much operates like its own community. They have their own Santa Claus parade. They have their own Remembrance Day ceremony. They have their own winter carnival, their own folk festival, which is August 15 this year.

They have a community centre that's owned by the City of St. John's but it's operated by a board. They have weekly bingo. They celebrate events. They have a lot of gatherings there, fundraisers, community suppers and they also rely on government funding. So it's good that's made available in the budget.

There are a lot of people who have made the community of Shea Heights special from the Druken family. Specifically, with the Druken, a lot of people know Harold Druken played 150 NHL games, 60 points and he was the World Junior silver medallist in '99, originally from there.

Being a dart enthusiast myself, John Norman Jnr., probably the best darts player to ever come from this province – one of the best, if not the best. He earned his PDC, which is a Professional Darts Corporation Tour Card in 2017. He represented Canada at the 2017 World Darts Championship alongside darts legend John Part, a two-time world champion.

I'll never forget there about four or five years ago when John was on the stage at Alexandra Palace – or Ally Pally for those darts people – competing representing Canada, which is very special.

I can't talk about Shea Heights without mentioning the Longshoremen's Protective Union (I.L.A) Local 1953 The LSPU have many members from Shea Heights and many generational members. I know grandparents, their sons and their grandsons that are now longshoremen union. They handle the work on the docks offloading the cargo. About 1880, I believe, was when they were first formed. So well over 100 years ago, approaching 150.

As people know, this is the Oceanex cargo ships. They off-load in MHA O'Leary's district, but it's shared with my district as well. People talk about how much Marine Atlantic imports from this province, but Oceanex also imports a lot here in this

province. Approximately 50 per cent of all goods destined for the Island come in through St. John's here at Oceanex. About 75 per cent of those goods supply St. John's and surrounding areas, and 95 per cent of new vehicles get off-loaded right here in St. John's.

Any of the Members here today or watching at home, Cape Spear, if you're ever driving out to Cape Spear through my district, I encourage you to drop into the Blackhead One-Room School and Church Museum. More specifically, around Christmas to their bake sale. The Starr family, specifically Christian Starr, brings his train set and they set up a village. It really needs to be seen to be appreciated. You can also pick up some of my world-famous, homemade bread, which is usually there for purchase.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

J. KORAB: Why there was laughs here, I don't know.

I also want to talk a bit about Bowring Park. For residents all over the Northeast Avalon, they use this park. There are kids' ball fields, a soccer field, dog park, duck ponds, large playgrounds, the outdoor splash centre, free swimming in the summer. They have a labyrinth that was put in there a few years back. It's a city-maintained park, but there is certainly provincial funding in there with the Bowring Park Foundation, which basically operates and puts different amenities in there. There's usually provincial funding in there.

I have to mention, actually, the river cleanup that took place yesterday. The Rotary Club of Waterford Valley, along with Banished Brewing and Atlantic Rivers Outfitting Company, they had a community cleanup of the river and I'd say there was probably about 50 people there. We hauled a lot of metal, a lot of things out of that water for the river. Bill Stoyles was there and I should say to Bill on record, I accidentally took home your safety vest. I will get that back to you.

But going along that river is where the old railway used to go up through and I've been looking for an old railway spike for some time. I swear I was on an episode of *The Curse of Oak Island* there and I was Gary Drayton metal detecting. When I found that railway spike, it was a real Bobby Dazzler, top-pocket find. I got it home in vinegar right now actually, getting the corrosion of the last 45 years off it to put in my collection in my garage.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

J. KORAB: You never thought I was going there today, did you? A real Bobby Dazzler. For *Hansard* too, Bobby Dazzler, I don't know how to spell it. You can look that up.

But just to loop it back in, a bit about public safety. I know one of the Members here mentioned it. So the National Police Federation welcomed the investment in the budget, and of course they would. There was 20 new RNC officers. They called that a great start, but they still said it was insufficient to reach the national average for officers per capita.

Some of our caucus had a meeting with the four members of the National Police Federation. They represent about 20,000 RCMP officers across Canada and about 470 here in Newfoundland. Like I said, they told us in that meeting they were happy with the new officers; 21 is a large number to have added all at once. What they'd like to see going forward is one, two, three, maybe four officers added per year and if this happens every year, there would be no need to come back in 10 years' time and ask for a couple dozen officers.

The trend has been that officers per capita has grown, while the RCMP service calls go up, so it's not a good trend. The extra officers will go a long way to help curb this. Some of the other things they would like to see and would have liked to have seen in the budget and, certainly, in next year's budget for the government, the fly-in or

drive-in model. That's working in some areas of our province now and right across Canada. They talked a lot about soft vacancies and people going off on paternal leave, long-term sick leave. So they'd like to have that addressed.

The minimum standards that would be allowed, the minimum amount of people you would have, they used the example, if you had 20 people in a detachment and a few people were off on soft vacancies, you could be down to 16, but if you staffed up to 24, and those same four people were off, then you're still at 20, which is the amount that could sustain that detachment.

They also talked a bit about bail reform, ensuing that it's being applied properly, but also that we have sufficient prosecutors and judges to carry this work out. They mentioned about special constables, which is already in the contract that was brought in last year, so that's something they want to see used more.

Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the NLTA, welcomed the \$625-million investment in the budget. That included 94 new teachers, 20 teaching staff, but they say that it doesn't fully address the significant gaps, recruitment, retention, complex student needs and the daily violence in schools. That was President Dale Lambe who described the efforts as insufficient in the 250 schools here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Erin Cullen, a committee member on Child Care Now NL, the ECE childhood educators' workforce, by and large is suffering from burnout. They haven't seen an increase in wage grid, which is over three years old now. They said we didn't see a pension plan, which was a commitment made in the blue book – this is her words – we don't have anything like paid sick time or an increase to medical benefit programs. In their words, it was certainly disappointing for them.

I know there are things in the works right now with the government, but someone who used to sit on the board of The Children's Centre, which is a daycare on Craigmillar Avenue in my district where my second daughter went, there are a lot of challenges facing these ECE workers, again, for the things they outlined. With this week being ECE Week, I'm looking forward to actually heading down to Craigmillar Avenue and having a chat with the ECE workers and getting more from them, talking more to them.

Multi-Year Capital Works, I'm going to save that for another time because I'm not going to fit that in in the time between now and eating, but just one of the things I'll highlight is – what's that?

AN HON. MEMBER: Eating.

J. KORAB: And eating. It's very important.

One thing just to highlight. The current government is always quick to say that they've only been here for two months or three months or, as they said, eight months. That's true, but just a couple of highlights that a lot of people talked about.

So Newfoundland and Labrador's real gross domestic product – GDP – is forecasted to increase by 5.5 per cent, driven primarily by higher oil prices and mineral production. It's expected to be the highest forecasted growth of GDP in every province in Canada. I guess if they've only been here eight months, it must have been our government that contributed to that.

Total employment is forecasted to increase by 0.2 per cent in 2026. So if they've only been here eight months, I guess it was our government that largely led to that.

Retail sales are expected to increase by 3.1 per cent in 2026 reflecting income growth and lower taxes. They've only been here eight months so I guess we can thank the previous for that.

Lots more I can talk about. I want to get into housing next time I'm up again, Mr. Speaker. There are some good things happening in there but there are also some serious things lacking.

So with that time and given the hour of the day, I will take my seat and look forward to speaking again.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that we do now adjourn debate on Motion 1.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that we now adjourn debate.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that we do now recess until 6:30 p.m.

SPEAKER: It is recommended that we take a recess now until 6:30 p.m.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

We are now in recess.