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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Are the Government House Leaders ready?

Good afternoon again, everyone.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we will hear Members' statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Terra Nova, Cape St. Francis, Baie Verte - Green Bay, Exploits and Labrador West.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's with great sadness today that I speak to honour a friend, a community leader and World War II veteran of the British navy who comes from my district.

Born on January 20, 1920, Harold Chesley Bull at the age of 19 enlisted in the Royal Navy and served on a corvette and a minesweeper. Harold Chesley Bull passed peacefully away May 28 at the age of 101 years old. He was not only a national war veteran, but an inspiration to his community and the entire province.

Mr. Bull was the first mayor of Eastport. He was very active in the community, a charter member of the Lions Club and the Royal Canadian Legion, instrumental in the formation of the Eastport Peninsula Volunteer Fire Department and held multiple positions on many community boards. I was so proud and privileged to be able to call you my friend, Ches.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to express all of our deepest condolences to his daughter Marion Hunt and her husband Wilf; granddaughter Krista Moores and her husband Wayne, and to his great-granddaughter Grace Moores.

Please join me in solemn remembrance of this decorated World War II veteran and a true hero.

Rest easy, soldier. Your duty is done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Mr. Speaker, on April 9, 1974, the Torbay Volunteer Fire Department was formed. Over the past 47 years, the department has provided exceptional fire and emergency service, on call 24-7, to the Town of Torbay and, for the past 20 years, to the Town of Flatrock as well.

Being active in the community on a regular basis, in addition to their weekly training, members take part in fundraising, Fire Prevention Week education, drive-through open house and parades, Santa Claus motorcade and a special-needs party organized by honorary life member Joe Tilley. To have such a dedicated group of individuals who give freely of their time and talents for the benefit of others is a testament to the department as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize Chief Mike McGrath, a founding member, on his 47 years of faithful and dedicated service to the department. Such a career has to be applauded. I thank all members past and present for their efforts and commitment into forming the Torbay Volunteer Fire Department into the professional environment it is today.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the Torbay Volunteer Fire Department on their 47th anniversary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. WARR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the late Harold Small, a former Member of this hon. House representing the district formerly known as Baie Verte - White Bay.

On May 17, 2021, the community of Wild Cove said goodbye to one of its most respected residents, Harold Small, at the age of 85.

Harold was a passionate advocate and worked to improve the quality of life for others. He was

involved in establishing and served as president of the Northeast Coast Sealers Co-operative. He served as treasurer of the Canadian Sealers Association; fisherman, seal hunter and fish plant owner. He worked hard to have a seal processing plant in Fleur de Lys.

He began building boats assisting his father planking trap skiffs. Recently, he built a longliner while still recuperating from hip replacement surgery.

Harold Small left an incredible legacy to this family and to the entire Baie Verte Peninsula. He will be remembered for his generosity, integrity, loyal friendship and humour.

Our thoughts are with his wife Maxine. His children: Ivan, Austin, Marsha and Melanie, their families and all who knew him including the fishing and sealing industry especially those on the Northeast Coast.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in offering condolences to the Small family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Ms. Shealah Hart of Northern Arm who recently was chosen by BGC Canada as one of the year's Regional Youth of the Year.

In partnership with Hyundai Canada and Mary Brown's, Youth of the Year is an initiative that celebrates youth leadership and achievement at clubs across the country.

Shealah has been a member of BGC Botwood for more than 13 years. She has served in numerous capacities at local and national levels; a dedicated volunteer, an employee and club ambassador representing Newfoundland and Labrador on BGC Canada's National Youth Council. She is currently enrolled at MUN in the social work faculty.

Mr. Speaker, as Regional Youth of the Year, she will continue to work with her local BGC and

BGCs from the Atlantic provinces to foster and support youth leaders.

I would like to congratulate Ms. Shealah Hart of Northern Arm on being awarded BGC's Regional Youth of the Year and I wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I'd like to recognize Josh Connors. Originally from Labrador City, Josh became a writer, producer and author of the successful, self-published play *Small Town Queer*.

Small Town Queer is a full-length play where several friends swap stories about growing up or living as a queer person in Newfoundland and Labrador. When the play was first launched, it was a sold-out house and was well received by the community. What was supposed to be a one-night show, turned into a multi-night, sold-out run. The book also topped the charts in five separate categories on Amazon's Best Sellers list.

Small Town Queer touches on the stories of rejection, love, coming out and many other themes. The countless stories and feedback from *Small Town Queer* has touched the lives of many people, whether through reading the play or seeing it on the stage.

I am incredibly proud of Josh and their continued success with the different projects he has presented, including their newest production *The Repercussions of Awkward Small Talk*. I'm excited to see what comes next for this inspiring individual.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating Josh on all their accomplishments.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize Environment Week and World Environment Day on June 5. Since 1971, we have used this week to raise awareness about the importance of environmental protection and conservation.

We can all do our part to preserve and restore our ecosystems through such actions as growing trees, greening our communities and cities, rewilding gardens and cleaning up ponds, rivers and coastlines.

Every action we take makes a difference. Today, I had the pleasure of attending the launch of a new project from Clean St. John's, funded in part by the MMSB, to curb cigarette butt litter found on sidewalks, in parks and on roadways. I want to congratulate Clean St. John's on this important initiative.

A significant part of environmental protection is the effort to address climate change. Through programs such as the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund and our Climate Change Action Plan, we are working not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but to stimulate clean innovation and growth, and build resiliency with climate change impacts. I encourage everyone to look into our energy efficiency programs for those applicable to your home, such as the rebates for installing insulation in electric- and oil-heated homes, through our partnership with takeCharge. Additional programs are available for lower income households through our Home Energy Savings Program with the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

As part of *Budget 2021*, our government announced \$500,000 for an electric vehicle adoption accelerator program, which will encourage the purchase of electric vehicles through a \$2,500 rebate to customers. We also announced \$1 million to help transition homes whose sole source of heat is oil to electricity.

This program will provide an additional rebate of \$2,500.

Mr. Speaker, we can all be environmental stewards in our province. A piece of litter begins in someone's hands. It is important we take every possible measure to protect our environment now and for future generations.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, I join with the minister in recognizing Environment Week and World Environment Day in this hon. House.

This year, the United Nations theme for World Environment Day is Ecosystem Restoration, a theme that I'm sure all of us can recognize is critically important for our future. We all have a role to play in preserving and restoring our ecosystems right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I believe that a government needs to lead the way and set the standard for maintaining healthy ecosystems.

As decision-makers and lawmakers, we have a responsibility to protect and defend our province from the effects of climate change and the destruction of our environment. With this in mind, I believe it's important to reflect on the recent failure to mitigate the methylmercury contamination of our Central Labrador ecosystems. We need to do better for future generations.

I ask for my hon. colleagues to reflect on their roles and keep our future generations at the top of their minds as we debate and conduct ourselves each day. Our Indigenous people and the most vulnerable of our society will be disproportionately affected and bear the brunt of environmental harm. We owe it to them to do what is right and what is just.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for providing an advance copy of his statement. As the climate crisis quickly reaches a tipping point, we must take firm and swift action, yet firm and swift would hardly describe the current government's approach.

Although they tout their \$40-million investment in low-carbon initiatives, the fact is they continue to pump \$60 million from this year's budget into the Oil and Gas Corporation and seismic testing. This figure does not include investments as part of Nalcor.

We call on government to drop its mixed messaging and act as a true environmental steward of this province and its future generations.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to speak in the House to extend congratulations to Ocean Whelan of St. John's, who is the recipient of the first annual Joanne Juteau Childhood Education Scholarship.

The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador presented the award to Ms. Whelan today during Early Childhood Educators' Week, which acknowledges and celebrates the crucial role of early childhood educators and what they do in the lives of our children.

Ms. Whelan is graduating from the College of the North Atlantic's full-time ECE diploma program this spring with a 4.0 GPA, while balancing being a mother to a young child,

working part-time in a regulated child care setting and volunteering.

Joanne Juteau, the namesake for the award, was known for her contributions to early childhood learning, inspiring and providing support to many early childhood educators within the field. Ms. Juteau spent time as a child care centre administrator, an ECE instructor and, most recently, with the Department of Education as regional manager.

She passed away unexpectedly last year, and her loss is felt keenly amongst her colleagues in the department. I would like to thank the association for this fitting tribute to her legacy.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Ocean Whelan and thanking early childhood educators for their dedication and commitment to providing essential support to families throughout the year and, more importantly, during this unprecedented time.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues on this side of the House join the hon. minister in congratulating Ocean Whelan on winning the first annual Joanne Juteau Early Childhood Education Scholarship.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Whelan graduated this past spring with a perfect 4.0 grade point average. I only wish my transcript reflected the same but, unfortunately, we can't all have four points. Ms. Whelan's accomplishment also balances her being a mother, working part-time and volunteering – truly remarkable.

Mr. Speaker, I also congratulate the Association of Early Childhood Educators on creating the award. Named after Joanne Juteau, someone who my office and I dealt with regularly – and we respect it – she made immeasurable contributions to the field over her lifetime. It's a

fitting tribute to the crucial role early childhood educators play in the lives of children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for providing an advance copy of his statement. The Third Party would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate Ms. Whelan for her receiving of this award.

Every day, people like her work hard to provide the best care for our children. Just like Ms. Whelan, they often have children of their own and have to balance work life with a number of other high priorities in their personal lives.

While we take this moment to honour their achievements and thank them for their dedication, let us also back up our words by calling on the government to ensure that childhood education workers are paid a living wage and receive fair employment benefits.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The budget said nothing about rate mitigation, federal equity in Hydro, marketing Labrador power or the Atlantic Loop.

Are these issues not part of the government's fiscal and economic plan for the '21-'22 budget?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before addressing that question, I just wanted to say I got my vaccine today in a system – the hard-working front-line health care workers and putting in place (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER A. FUREY: As the hon. Member knows, we are certainly working hard towards rate mitigation. This is a conundrum that was laid on our laps; we are actively fixing it.

We've been very open about where we are with the negotiations; they're ongoing right now between Serge Dupont and Brendan Paddick. We've baked some of this into the budget of this year. We're hoping to have something to announce in the short term, but right now negotiations are still ongoing. I think it would jeopardize our commercial position to have those negotiations in public.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Premier, but the people in Newfoundland and Labrador need to know that come this fall that their electricity bills will not be unmanageable.

The Premier's Greene report said "the window for new oil and gas exploration and development has narrowed considerably. Projects that are not discovered in the next five years ... may never be developed." It also says none of Ottawa's \$320 million can be used towards exploration.

I ask the Premier: Is there a particular reason this year's budget failed to call on Ottawa to invest in offshore oil and gas exploration, like they refused to do last year?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the hon. Member opposite knows, we did have an exploration incentive program in place

last year. It was celebrated by Noia; it was celebrated by the operators. We're hoping that more will avail of that as that commodity rises from the global economic crisis that we didn't cause, Mr. Speaker.

We're certainly here to support oil and gas during this time of transition. We recognize the urgency, the value and we're going to continue to make strategic investments to ensure that we recognize that value while it is valuable.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're hearing from everybody on every side of the industry that exploration is key and investment is necessary in the immediate future for us to be able to create employment in this province.

The former Finance minister used to talk about the lack of fairness in the equalization formula. Moya Greene also talked about lack of fairness.

Why was there not a mention of fairness in equalization in this budget, considering the huge dollar amounts involved?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the hon. Member opposite knows, equalization is a complex formula and one that is not due to be renegotiated right now. We are committed to renegotiate it when it becomes available, to renegotiate with the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at heart.

We understand the importance of equalization and the federal transfer payment, and that's why we're working in collaboration. The efforts that we are progressing with Ottawa, whether it's on rate mitigation, on child care or on other initiatives, show how a collaborative approach can actually accomplish things. Equalization, I'm sure, will be no different.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Premier knows, it's his Liberal cousins who pushed it down the road to benefit other provinces at the expense of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador in not getting its fair share in this Confederation.

The Budget Speech said "ferries in the province are heavily subsidized, some as much as 95 per cent" "Therefore, we will invite joint solutions for a more effective way to maintain and improve the delivery of ferry service"

Premier: Do you intend to privatize the ferry services?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member knows, the ferry systems right now are not working for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians across the province. We need to look at different options available to us to ensure that they're actually delivering the services that are required.

I ask the Member opposite: Is it appropriate to have 4,000 runs with no people on the ferry, Mr. Speaker? Is that good use of the taxpayers' money?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The remains of 215 children were found buried at a former residential school in British Columbia. It's shocking to all Canadians, but to Indigenous people it's just a harsh reminder of the harm done to defenceless children.

It's discouraging that this budget does nothing to address food insecurity, heating insecurity and unaffordable housing for Indigenous people.

I ask the minister: Why is this the case?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, we certainly join the country in mourning the discovery of the buried remains of 215 children at the site of a former residential school. Flags were lowered half-mast and we had a moment of silence yesterday. Gut wrenching, unthinkable, Mr. Speaker.

There are a number of things that this province is doing. We are engaged weekly, myself and the Premier, working very closely with Indigenous groups, respectful dialogue, listening to the Indigenous groups on the things that matter with them. I would say, Mr. Speaker, we are not where we need to be, but we are at a place in the last number of months with Indigenous leaders where we have never been before in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Greene report recommended a one point HST hike while the budget did not commit.

I ask the minister: Is there an HST hike included in your fiscal forecast?

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

S. COADY: Thank you.

I appreciate the question, and the answer is no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget forecasted a \$900-million slash to expenditures in the next fiscal year, '22-'23.

I ask the minister: What cuts are contained within the \$900-million cuts that are coming next year?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Allow me to correct the Member opposite in his assumptions around the revenues and the expenses of government. Allow me to inform him and the people of the province that the expenses contain one-time monies that the federal government is providing to the province, including \$320 million for oil and gas.

I'm sure the Member opposite is pleased to see that amount of money go to the oil and gas industry, considering what some of the earlier questions were. It also contains some of the federally cost-shared programs, it contains \$20 million for COVID relief and it contains \$100 million for health.

So you can see, Mr. Speaker, that the one-time increase in expense from this year is because of those extraneous issues and not because of –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I actually thank the minister for the clarification. So it's not \$900 million, it's only half a billion dollars that is coming in cuts next year.

I would ask the minister: How much of that is to be taken out of the health care system?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think all of what I just added up was over \$700 million, so I'll just remind the Member of that if you look at the bottom line differences. Mr. Speaker, we have outlined a number of transformations and modernizations that we will undertake to ensure that we are most efficient and effective within government.

We will improve services because of the way we are going to be delivering services. The people of the province know our financial situation and they are asking us – as a matter of fact, I would say demanding – that we as a province start to get our fiscal house in better order, and that is exactly what we're doing. We went from \$1.84 billion in deficit last year to \$826 million this year; we'll go to \$587 million next year, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her answer but she really didn't answer it. I simply asked how much of your fiscal forecast for next year's cuts are coming out of the health care system. If you know it, tell us; if you don't know, tell us that too.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

He is asking me to divulge next year's budget. Can he focus on this year's budget, Mr. Speaker?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: I can tell you that we have done tremendous work; we have held the line. The Canadian institute of health have congratulated the province on holding the line of expenditure with health care when everyone else across the country has gone up, Mr. Speaker.

We have been very, very diligent in keeping our health care costs as low as possible. We have a Health Accord that's doing a beautiful analysis, I think, Mr. Speaker, talking to the people of the province, how we're going to deliver health care over the next 10 years.

We have already said to the Members opposite and to the people of the province we're going to start streamlining back office functions that will not impact front-line services in health care, but streamlining back office services. That will help us get to zero on our deficit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Yesterday, the minister in her Budget Speech put in a table that outlined the fiscal forecast for the next five years and how they're going to get to a balanced budget. Today, we're hearing they don't know what's in those numbers.

I ask the minister: Will you let the people of the province know what your plan is by tabling what's in the fiscal forecast and what your breakdown is?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know the Member opposite has never been in government and I know he probably hasn't sat through many Budget Speeches, but always in budget, including when the former PCs were in power, there was always a multi-year forecast. Mr. Speaker, we have provided that forecast, we have provided the transformations that we'll be undertaking for the next number of years to help us get to a balance budget. We have provided the information on investments this year.

Perhaps the Member opposite wants to focus on what we're doing this particular year rather than worrying about outlying years, because I will be able to say this, Mr. Speaker: we're going to get the job done of getting to a balanced budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, I was a former ADM in budget. I know exactly how the budget process works and I know that fiscal forecasts –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

T. WAKEHAM: – are prepared by government departments. So to turn around and say that you don't know what makes up the numbers that you've put in your own document – not good enough.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Greene report recommended a fire sale of public assets in Newfoundland and Labrador, from oil and gas equity stakes, to ferry services, to the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation.

I ask the minister: Which assets is she looking at selling off, who is leading the review and when will it be completed?

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

S. COADY: I know how the Member opposite likes to put words in my mouth, but what he said was completely incorrect. I certainly know what's in the fiscal forecast and I know what's in this year's budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: I've been very, very clear and the budget is very, very clear in how we're going to get to zero, Mr. Speaker. We've talked about transformations. We've talked about investments. We've talked about growing our economy. We've talked about incentivising and encouraging people to get better health and more healthy. We're talking about those things, including having a very good analysis done through the Health Accord to make sure that we

have a very detailed plan on how we're going to improve our health care system.

The Member opposite keeps trying to put words in my mouth. To answer his question, Mr. Speaker, I've outlined in the Budget Speech the assets that we're going to consider. We'll do a full review and make an analysis, and then from there make a decision on if anything is up for sale.

SPEAKER: Time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance also talks about transparency. The government talks about transparency. Surely, the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve to know what's in the fiscal forecast, how it's going to roll out and how they're going to achieve their balanced budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Moya Greene, again, said Nalcor must be abolished. The budget only calls for a review ahead of a restructured Nalcor.

I ask the minister: How much of Nalcor will be removed within government and how much will be sold off to the private sector?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question from the Member opposite.

What I would point out is there are a couple of things here. I wouldn't want to jump ahead when we talk about how much is going to be sold off, how much is going to be this, how much is going to be that, because the reality is there is still work to do.

The big thing that we need to concentrate on is that Muskrat Falls is towards the finish line of getting done and we need to ensure that our attention is paid to getting that project finally

completed. That being said, at the same time, we will be undergoing a review of Nalcor as well as OilCo. I think it's incumbent on us to have a look at these corporations: Why they were created? What purpose they were created for and where are we now? I think that would be a purpose of good governance.

We don't have the answers right yet, but what I can say is we will be holding a microscope to organizations like that to figure out where do we go that's best for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I hope it's not the same microscope you've been using since 2016.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Greene report said our equity interest in oil and gas should be sold. In the same breath, she acknowledged the downside of selling such an asset when oil prices are low.

Is the government considering the sale of any or all of the province's equity stakes in our offshore energy (inaudible)?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I can say is that we are very lucky in this province to have an offshore industry that has given untold good to this province in terms of revenues and royalties to this province. We're very proud of it and we're very thankful for it.

Like anything, when you have an asset, you would like to know what the evaluation is. Again, we will be looking at an evaluation of where we are, but I can tell the Member opposite that there are absolute no conversations ongoing as it relates to divesting of that right now.

I know it's mentioned in the Greene report, but do you know what? The Greene report is another really solid piece of information that government can use to figure out the way

forward. The same way that I listen to groups like Noia; I listen to groups like NEIA. We listen to interested stakeholders all the time and they will guide us in how we move forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, *The Way Forward* included *Advance 2030*, and here we are.

A briefing note prepared on April 21, 2021, noted that the province offered to buy a 15 per cent equity stake in Terra Nova. The minister is offering to buy equity stakes, while the Premier's report is saying they must be sold.

I ask the minister: What is your stance on equity stakes in our offshore?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I can say is that equity stakes, depending on one person's, I guess, perspective, they can have different meanings. What I would say is you have to look at them, how you find them right now. Again, I have nothing for or against equity stakes. What I do concern myself with is what is in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians when it comes to our offshore oil assets.

Right now, I can tell you that there are a lot of ongoing negotiations, especially as it relates to Terra Nova. Everybody knows the situation there, there's been a lot of talk about it. That's where our attention is focused right now.

Again, right now, we're not talking about investment, per se; we're not talking about divestment. What we are talking about, when it comes to Terra Nova, is trying to figure out a way – how do we continue to have that asset operating in our offshore?

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: We will both agree on the importance of the Terra Nova. It employs thousands of men and women directly and indirectly.

There's no mention in the budget of the Premier's Greene report recommendation to sell the Bull Arm fabrication site.

Is government confirming that this sale is off the table?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not aware of any sale of Bull Arm or any non-sale of Bull Arm. What I am aware of is that we do have that asset there. We know that there are assets that are stacked out there right now. We also have the FPSO out there. Again, we would like to see some movement on that, but right now that's not a conversation that's happening. In fact, we've been concentrating on some other bigger issues within the department.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, government turned their backs on the students in the province and paved the way for massive tuition hikes at MUN.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

B. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, what analysis has the department done on how doubling and tripling of tuition will affect student enrolment and debt?

And I find it kind of troubling that Members across the way find that funny, Mr. Speaker.

I'll wait for the minister's response.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I find it troubling that the Member would say we've turned our backs on students.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

T. OSBORNE: He, obviously, Mr. Speaker, didn't pay close enough attention to the announcement yesterday.

To start, we've spent \$68.4 million of taxpayer funding last year, another \$68.4 million this year. If we hadn't changed the tuition freeze, Mr. Speaker, we would be over \$80 million per year in just three years from now. That was unsustainable. The tuition freeze had to end, Mr. Speaker, but we did clearly articulate yesterday that we were putting additional and expanded student grant measures in place to help Newfoundland and Labrador students.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister might want to listen to the question. I asked him what analysis had been done, and that has been my question all along. You can't just up tuition rates without understanding what's going on the other side at MUN. I've been well quoted on it and I'll continue to state that fact. That's the problem: You can't do one without the other.

Mr. Speaker, student groups have already spoken out in the wake of the Premier's Greene report saying tuition will skyrocket.

What specific protection will the minister make to protect students?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I'll say that we're putting additional and expanded student grant programs in place for Newfoundland and Labrador students. The tuition freeze, Mr. Speaker, regardless of where you came from, kept tuitions low and Newfoundland and Labrador taxpayers paid for that tuition freeze to the tune of \$68 million a year, and growing by an additional \$4 million a year. We will put in place additional expanded student grant needs-based programs to help Newfoundland and Labrador students.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: I guess there was no analysis done, Mr. Speaker.

While tuition is poised to double or triple, does the minister believe a contract with the Office of the President should spend tax dollars to buy personal fitness equipment and pay for personal tax preparation?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of that, but if the Member wishes to share the details, we'll certainly look into it.

On the issue of tuition, Mr. Speaker, Memorial University has been asking to lift the tuition freeze for a number of years. They support that. So the analysis is probably done by the people who actually set tuition: Memorial University.

In terms of the students and the council, or the Federation of Students, there are only 26 per cent of students in this province, Mr. Speaker, who actually availed of student assistance last year. Tuitions are obviously set very, very low at present.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, before the minister gives Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador –

make sure I get the name correct – a blank cheque with no control, as a part of the review for the MUN act will he mandate they annually appear before the Public Accounts Committee?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Premier has spoken already and said that there will be more accountability. With more autonomy, comes more accountability. I've said that and I've been quoted as saying that in the media.

The changes to the *Memorial University Act* will come with greater accountability, including the Auditor General being able to have unfettered access.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Budget Speech said: "... we will be taking the appropriate steps to integrate the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District into the Department of Education."

Will the government table its analysis on this? How much savings will result and how will it produce better educational outcomes among our children?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I think that our record on improving educational outcomes speaks for itself: the *Education Action Plan*, the \$42 million put into the classroom.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. OSBORNE: What we are looking to do is find operational efficiencies, as well as fiscal efficiencies, Mr. Speaker. The fiscal efficiencies, the savings, will go to the classroom and will go to improving educational outcomes to put us at a more competitive edge amongst Canadian provinces, because right now we're lagging behind.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We'd like to know what the savings are. I guess we'll find that out maybe in Estimates Thursday night.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister have any breakdown on what jobs will be affected, where these particular positions are located in the province and how services to children will be impacted?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, there will be no impact to the students in the province. There will be no downloading of responsibilities onto our administrators or our educators. In fact, what we need is a unified vision in this province to eliminate the duplication between the department and the English School District, and putting those savings into the classroom to improve educational outcomes in this province.

It is too early at this point to determine what the attrition will be or what the impacts will be, what the savings will be, Mr. Speaker. But the NLESD – and I've spoke with Mr. Stack and he's committed to working with us on this transition. As we move forward, we'll have a better understanding of what the fiscal savings and operational efficiencies will be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government, in their budget yesterday, announced a sugar tax that will be implemented on April 1, 2022, without any details. When asked about implementing this tax in 2016 this government's Finance minister at the time said: "As a province, we would have to take on the administrative responsibilities that would be equal to the functions of the Canada Revenue

Agency" This was something that we thought a province of 500,000 could not take on.

I ask the minister: What has changed?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question.

The implementation of a sugar tax has been done in multiple jurisdictions around the world and all across the United States. Five years has passed since the Member opposite is referring.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: It's five years since that time and things have changed. We know that the health outcomes – and that's what we're really focused on here, is a narrative around health outcomes and making sure that we're doing everything for those health outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, we are working through the logistics around the sugar tax, so it will be a bill that will come to this House in the fall. More details will be forthcoming at that time.

Mr. Speaker, no matter where the administration is, the point of the matter is this is a positive step forward to ensuring the health of the people of the province and taking that money then and putting it towards health and health care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we grapple with the discovery of 215 remains at the site of a former residential school in British Columbia, I ask the Premier: Will he commit to an immediate review of all residential schools and orphanage sites in this province, as we as a province have a duty to truth and reconciliation?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. As I mentioned earlier today, our government certainly joins the country in mourning the discovery of the buried remains.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed as a government to respectful dialogue. We empathize with the families and the individuals. We're hearing some things coming out in the media from the federal government, from across our fellow provinces and territories and we're certainly committed to engaging in dialogue to see where this takes us.

We are in very early days right yet, Mr. Speaker. We want to be respectful of people coming to terms. There is no doubt that this is having an impact and bringing back lots of trauma for people, but we are certainly committed as a government to working with provinces, territories and the federal government as we move forward on direction.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One thing was noticeably absent from the budget: rate mitigation. The budget is promoting switching to hydro to heat homes, but what is the point if people can't afford to pay their bill.

I ask the Premier: Where is the plan? The clock is ticking and it is about to strike midnight.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question.

As I mentioned previously in this sitting, the work of rate mitigation is ongoing between Mr. Paddick and Mr. Dupont. We hope to provide updates as they occur. My understanding is they are progressing nicely.

This is indeed an issue that faces all of us. I didn't create it but this government will fix it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The budget plans to spend a significant amount more money in oil and gas activities than other industries like mining, the fishery, agriculture, tourism and forestry.

If we truly intend to diversify our economy, I ask the minister: Where is the investment in our future? Where is the plan?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question from the Member.

I think we'll have to differ on our opinion because I see significant investments in a number of areas that diversify our economy. In fact, I look at one that should be interesting to the Member: we've put increased money into our mining sector this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: We have an increase of funding as it relates to technology. We're going to have an increase of funding as it relates to investment and attraction. We have an increase in funding as it relates to tourism. We have an increase in money as it relates to small business.

I say to the Member Opposite that I look forward to the budget debate so that you can see investments we are making in the future of this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Nalcor has been shrouded in secrecy for years. We also know

that once OilCo was created, courtesy of the *Energy Corporation Act*, OilCo was also shrouded in that same secrecy.

I ask the minister: Once you have finished your work in terms of the consolidation of Nalcor, Hydro, OilCo, whatever you're going to do, whatever entity is left, will they fall under the ATIPPA legislation?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the question from the Member opposite, but, again, it's still a little early to tell. Now, what I will say to the Member is that as one of the Members of this House who has sat through the Bill 29 debate, who has sat through the Muskrat Falls debate and has sat through multiple debates – and, again, right now, we're waiting on the new ATIPPA review – what I can say is that once we get the work done, whatever comes out – and I think we've shown that we want to see the best interests of the province represented here as it relates to our energy management, as well as it relates to our information access. What I can say is that I want to be able to stand here in this House and defend what we do and I think that the Member opposite, when it is done, will probably be in agreement that what we are doing is in the best interest of the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: I thank the minister for the answer.

Mr. Speaker, the last provincial election was riddled with inconsistencies and numerous issues; people not being able to vote and so on. We know we have a Committee that's going to be looking at new legislation, but I ask the Premier: Will this government commit to an independent investigation of everything that happened in the recent provincial general election, have a report issued and present it to this House of Assembly so that we can debate in

the House and ensure that all those parties involved in said election are held accountable?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member opposite for the question.

As he knows, as he pointed out, this was a priority of the Premier when the election was over, to task me and the Department of Justice and Public Safety with revising and updating the *Elections Act, 1991*, which 1991 is written in the title so it is time now to get on with it and modernize it.

Again, as the Member opposite did note, we have had an All-Party Committee that has been struck. In fact, the All-Party Committee has already had its first meeting; we plan to have our second meeting, which I think is scheduled for June 14. There's already been tremendous headway made into modernizing the Elections Act and, as we do that, we will be talking to members of the public, to talk to them and find out what issues they had in terms of voting in the last election.

The legislation that we will deliver to the House will enable all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to vote as easy as possible.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That the Member for Lake Melville be appointed Deputy Chair of Committees.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to present a petition concerning the previous election in 2021.

The cornerstone of any democratic society is the right of citizens to choose their representatives to serve in the Legislature. This process must not only be carried out in a fair and impartial manner with all appropriate checks and balances to ensure this principle is upheld, it must be perceived as being conducted that way.

The recent NL provincial general election has brought serious allegations, numerous concerns and inconsistencies to light, including a potential breach of the *Elections Act, 1991*. As a result, thousands of people were potentially denied their democratic right to vote.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly to call upon the government to work with the Opposition parties and the independent Members to develop terms of reference for an initiation of an independent investigation of the recent provincial general election to be carried out by an individual or entity as agreed to by all parties and independent Members of the House.

Upon completion of the investigation, to table and debate the report in the House of Assembly with a view of seeking accountability for any inappropriate decisions made and ensuring a legislative review of the *Elections Act, 1991* is

conducted in order to restore the public confidence of our electoral system.

Mr. Speaker, I will bring several petitions in the House of Assembly on that matter. I know the Minister of Justice and Public Safety has struck a Committee. I just want to put it out for the record that they asked the independents. The two independents went and agreed with one Member, and the minister went off and selected someone separate. That is the minister's prerogative, no doubt, but I felt slighted. I know my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands – because we want to get to the answers. We don't want to have a Committee – and I can see that the PC Party will hold Bruce Chaulk and the government accountable, and the Premier accountable, if he had any – I just say to the minister, if you're going to actually engage independents, you should do it with the honour to respect their decisions, because it's a reflection on you. This is no reflection on me if I'm not on the Committee. I'm not going to stop talking about it, but it's a reflection on the people of Humber - Bay of Islands when you make a decision like that, I say to the minister.

Something noteworthy that I noticed in this is – and it's the minister's decision; I said it before – there are three Members from Labrador on the Committee. There's not one from the West Coast; not one Member of this Committee. All the seniors on the West Coast, all the people who were denied the opportunity on the West Coast, can't be on it.

I know there are a lot of concerns in the Premier's district, and I know that there were a lot of concerns that the Liberal Party was in contact with Bruce Chaulk, so I'm wondering why there's no one on the West Coast –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the Member not to call someone by their name.

E. JOYCE: Oh, sorry, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. Sorry about that, Mr. Speaker.

That is a slight for the people on the West Coast.

The other thing that is very upsetting here: Here we are going to go out now and we're going to say: Okay, put in your comments. Most of the seniors that were denied the right didn't have a computer to file a ballot. Now, you're going to ask them to file their concerns online. What a slap in the face to the seniors on the West Coast who never had the opportunity to vote.

I'll be bringing a petition in, back and forth, on a regular basis.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The background of this petition is as follows: At present, there is no left-turning lane on the Trans-Canada Highway entering Lakeside resort near Thorburn Lake on a straight stretch of a two-lane highway with a posted speed limit of 100 kilometres per hour.

Many users have complained of near misses entering the park or living areas and are afraid that a tragic accident could occur at any time due to traffic congestion in an area with limited views.

Campers are trying to make a left turn with families. The lack of a left-turning lane is having a negative impact and is deterring some users from staying at the resort or entering their cabins, and the owner of the park is contemplating a closure of this facility.

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 add a left-turning lane on the TCH as a safety measure for park users entering the park, similar to those existing at other parks throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you right now what the minister is going to stand up and say: It's a

private business and government has no right interfering in this private business. Well, this private business has been there for 50 years and this turning lane is long overdue.

The volume of traffic and campers that turn in there on a regular basis, it's massive. There are over a hundred campsites, and when they turn in, it's families. It's not one individual that's turning. I'm not saying that one individual is less important than a family of five, but if an accident happens, it's going to be tragic.

Three years ago, they put a similar lane just down the road going into a camp area, literally 1.5 kilometres away. The government paid for it.

My concern with this is that government now has a plan in place where they're going to pave this section of road this summer. This is the best opportunity to do this work and they're not even considering it. This isn't about a park; this isn't about anything other than the health and safety of families that utilize this facility. It's been there for a very long time. Government has an opportunity to fix this at a fraction of the price and they should seize that opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reason for this petition is the need for seniors' accessible housing and home care services in Labrador West is steadily increasing. Long-time residents of the region are facing the possibility of needing to leave the region, their homes, in order to afford to live or receive adequate care. Additional housing options, including assisted living care facilities, like those found throughout the rest of the province for seniors, has become a requirement for Labrador West. That requirement is currently not being met.

WHEREAS the seniors of our province are entitled to peace and comfort in the homes where they have spent their entire lives

contributing to the growth and prosperity of this province; and

WHEREAS the means for the increasing number of senior residents in Labrador West to happily age in place are currently not available in the region;

WHEREUPON we, the undersigned, your petitioners, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to allow seniors in Labrador West to age in place and provide affordable housing options for seniors and assisted living care facilities for those who require it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm presenting a petition with over 416 signatures, and I'll be presenting more of these from my region as my region is becoming a larger senior population. In the past, Labrador West had the youngest population. Now we have the fastest aging population in the region, as more (inaudible) people who have lived in Lab West.

I'm the third generation to live in Labrador West since my grandfather went up there in 1959; more and more people want to stay. My family, my parents are staying in Labrador West because they want to be around my children, their grandchildren, and this is happening more and more. We're having more people retiring from the mining industry and other industries and staying in Labrador West. Traditionally, residents of Labrador West would go back to their community where they came from, but now the community they came from is Labrador West.

We have a significant need for senior care. We do have some long-term care beds, but that's for Level IV care. A majority of the people in Lab West right now are looking at II and III at most. Those kinds of care are not available. Home care is almost non-existent in Labrador West right now. We're in between a rock and a hard place right now for our seniors who actually need some supports.

They're living in very large houses, three- or four-bedroom houses. There's maybe a widow or maybe an older couple and they can't afford to maintain that large house between the two of them. There are no options for them to downsize

or move into a mini-retirement community where it's a one- or two-bedroom little unit that's more equated to the size and requirements they need. Then, to retrofit these large older houses to meet the needs of seniors, even that is a costly burden or is non-existent because of the construction of the home.

We're putting our seniors in Labrador West in a really hard place. Where they have to make the decision: Do I stay in Labrador West or do I leave my entire family behind, go to a community that I don't know to live out their remaining years. The years that you're supposed to be retired and enjoying retirement, they're going to live in a community that's alien to them.

This is where we are putting seniors right now. We don't have the care that they deserve and that's the problem right now in Labrador West. They don't have the care or the things that they deserve. After all the years of hard work in building a community in Labrador West, they don't have it.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows: Route 10 from Trepassey to Peter's River is a part of the scenic Irish Loop drive, a destination for many tourists, foreign and local.

WHEREAS many of the tourists travel to visit the various attractions along the parts of the Irish Loop. Visitors come to see both the old and the new tourist attractions in recent years, therefore, increasing traffic volumes along this section of highway;

We, the undersigned, urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade this significant piece of road infrastructure, including asphalt, sight lines and shoulders, so many tourists will be more inclined to visit this area

and residents will be provided a safer commute during day and night.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of going up again this year to a cleanup in St. Shott's. When I left St. Shott's I drove over to Peter's River. When I go to the community, all I hear is the conditions of the roads, really, from Trepassey right to Peter's River. Now, if they're coming from St. John's and going out Salmonier Line, they're going to go over the district that has just been paved. They forgot this section of road with the tourists. So if they're going to go over, stop and go back, well, they're fine.

If they keep going around the Irish Loop it's called, not half the Irish Loop, they'll meet a condition that the roads – well, I've had people tell me that he left to go to St. John's. He always has a pump and a jack in his car for people with flats. He offered to help somebody last year; they had three flats. They're never going to recommend anyone to go around the Irish Loop. People with campers say the same thing. I would say they spent more on the asphalt there to fill the potholes than they would to pave that road.

There's not much, whatever they call it, in the holes. I can't think of the word for it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Cold patch.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Cold patch.

If you go up there and you're driving around – you're on the left side of the road going up there. When I'm going up, I'm on the left side of the road trying to get around the potholes to go up there. It's embarrassing.

For people as tourists to go up there, local and coming from away, to be driving this road it's incredible. With all the tourist attractions you have – you have the Trepassey motel there for people, the B & Bs and houses and stuff like that. You have Mistaken Point; you have the Colony of Avalon around the way. In another month or so, you're going to have the people up there visiting whales. In the last three or four years, just driving along St. Vincent's and going to that area – which you go through Peter's River going up the Southern Shore Highway – it's a detriment to be going that road during the day and worse in the nighttime when you can't

see the holes and bang, you're in a hole and the tire is gone.

I would love for the government to be able to give us a plan, to see what their plan is to be able to fix that road and be able to bring it up to some tourist attraction, not a tourist distraction to go up there.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

My petition today: Labrador has a rate of sexual assault of nearly four times the national average, according to the RCMP and the RNC. While this region only makes up 5 per cent of the province's total population, Labrador has 25 per cent of the police-reported sexual assaults.

In 2020, Statistics Canada reported that there were 449 police-reported sexual assaults on average for every 100,000 people in Canada, while Labrador had about 681. Many of the sexual assault survivors are Innu or Inuit living in communities where support services are lacking. It is crucial that the victims of sexual assault receive proper care as to not be further traumatized. It is also important for the people administering the care to be culturally aware and to have the proper education in these matters. The nearest professionally trained support is based here in St. John's.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to establish a sexual assault nurse examiner in Labrador that can support survivors and provide awareness education regarding these terrible crimes.

Mr. Speaker, this matter was actually raised by my colleague from the NDP this morning and I thanked him for that. At that time, it was suggested that perhaps it is the Department of Health and Community Services; we were in Justice and Public Safety Estimates. I'm hoping

that we can get some clarification on a particular line item in the budget.

I did want to add a couple other comments, if I could, just around the statistics. It is important for this House of Assembly and people watching to understand that some 83 per cent of sexual assaults are not reported to the police. What we are dealing with are probably – and, unfortunately, this crime that we are speaking about is the least likely to be reported to the police. Adverse health effects for survivors, including PTSD, anxiety disorders, substance use and depressive disorders are just some of the effects that these victims are dealing with.

Sexual assault nurse examiner programs are known to have, however, a very positive effect on survivors, while being sent to an emergency room or to the police certainly has the opposite effect. These programs have been shown to make survivors confident to seek justice. The specialists are properly trained in collecting evidence with specialized techniques and trained in crisis intervention, ensuring emotional and medical care.

In *Budget 2021*, released yesterday, there was a line item of some \$425,000 allocated for the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program and further initiatives. I would ask this House of Assembly, and particularly the Minister of Health and Community Services, does that also indicate that we may have a professional position in Labrador, where it's most needed?

Thank you very much.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly echo the concern just said here by my colleague today. But I am happy to say that the Office of Women and Gender Equality allocated \$225,000 for the expansion of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program last year, and the same amount has been allocated again this year.

I'm also happy to say, on behalf of my colleague, the Department of Health and Community Services certainly is working with

the regional health authorities to expand the same program into areas covered by Labrador-Grenfell and Central Health.

As we get more updates, of course, more information will be forthcoming, but I just want to confirm and certainly concur with the hon. Member that it certainly is a very important issue, one that can no longer be ignored, and there's a lot of work to do. We certainly are committed to doing that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 11.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that under the authority of Standing Order 65, that the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, the Member for Conception Bay South, the Member for Harbour Main and the Member for St. John's Centre shall comprise a Committee, and in accordance with the *Standing Orders* shall report, within the first 20 days of appointment, lists of Members to compose the Standing Committees of the House referred to in Standing Order 65(1).

SPEAKER: The motion is that we pass Motion 11, striking the Committees.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 12.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that the Public Accounts Committee comprise the following Members: the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, the Member for St. George's - Humber, the Member for Mount Pearl North, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, the Member for Terra Nova and the Member for Labrador West.

That the Privileges and Elections Committee comprise the following Members: the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans and the Member for St. John's Centre.

That the Standing Orders Committee comprise the following Members: the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, the Member for Mount Scio, the Member for Windsor Lake, the Member for Harbour Main and the Member for Labrador West.

That the Miscellaneous and Private Bills Committee comprise the following Members: the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, the Member for St. George's - Humber, the Member for Topsail - Paradise and the Member for St. John's Centre.

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

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.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 13.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, June 2, 2021, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and to conduct government business and that at 5 p.m. the Speaker shall adjourn the House.

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to have a few words on that motion.

It's just a pattern, Mr. Speaker, that you see, when the government wants to consult and doesn't go along, usually for a sham of consulting. Here we are again today taking these *Standing Orders*, and because the government just doesn't want to extend the time in this House, and just asking to change the *Standing Orders* because they want it changed.

The *Standing Orders* are put in place by a Committee. The *Standing Orders* are edged in this House of Assembly so that we all know what will be called on what day. Here we are again, the government, with their slim majority just asking to change the *Standing Orders* to fit what they want on their agenda. What the Routine Proceedings would be, can be carried out on another day; it could be carried on extension. It would be about the budget, it could be carried on. The Premier, as we all know, don't like it in the House of Assembly so let's get this over and the government with their slim majority, let's just hobnob, push everything through, let's change the *Standing Orders*.

There's a Standing Orders Committee in this House of Assembly that right now we're even sidestepping that Committee so that the government can try to push through their agenda without following the proper process in this House.

I said it before when I was in the Opposition, when we start allowing the government to just ram everything through, that's when democracy is starting to fail; that's when democracy will fail. I can assure you now, you can see the slippery slope that we're gradually going down now, that on two or three different occasions the government went and asked for the advice of – I'll just use the independents and go completely against it, but go public and say, well, we consulted. Consultation was more or less just to say that they did it and not follow through on it.

I remember the last time we changed the *Standing Orders*, Mr. Speaker, it was when there was no debate on closure. I know the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands was with me and we had great discussions with the Premier and a certain minister and then the next thing you know we're going to be brought into it, we're going to be part of the group. The next thing you know we walked into the House of Assembly, a week later, boom here it is. We were sitting down with those people a week before talking about collaboration; nothing is going to happen unless we sit down and have discussions. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands can remember that meeting.

This is the slippery slope we're going down, folks. I've been around long enough and I've

seen it before. If anybody in this House wants to look at it, look at Bill 29 that we had to stand up – look at Muskrat Falls, we should all have – not everybody, I'm not pointing fingers here, but everybody should ask more questions.

The minute we just allow things to just take it and push it through, just for the government agenda, we are not doing our duties as MHAs – we are not. Because what's next? We're going to take it and just push it on through this House of Assembly. Once we allow the *Standing Orders* just to be changed because of a motion in this House, because they have a majority, it's shameful on behalf of the government just to do that, just to walk in, instead of having consultations to say here's the reason why.

People might say: Well, it's only three hours on a Wednesday. It might be only two hours, actually, 3 to 5. But it's not the two hours, it's the precedent that we're setting. Once we start allowing this to happen because the government has the majority and we don't follow the proper procedures about the Standing Orders Committees in this House of Assembly, I can assure you there are going to be a lot of changes done and there are going to be a lot more issues.

By the time we allow this to continue, we will not be able to stop that slippery slope. I've seen the slippery slope happen before, and once you go down that slippery slope you're going to give credence to all of these changes, you're going to allow this to happen without any debate and you're going to allow this to happen because they have a majority, the Liberals have a majority right now.

I guarantee you – remember I said it – there are a lot of things I've said in this House before that came true, this is going to be another one. If the government are just allowed to walk in and change any Standing Order they like, democracy is not being served properly. Democracy is not being served.

As we noticed in the motion that was made, there's no rationale for it. Absolutely no rationale. If we had some very serious issue that we say we would like to put it in for this time slot, I'm sure everybody would say: We all agree. Everybody would say: We all agree. But just to walk in, click the fingers, we want to

change because we want to get out of the House of Assembly probably two or three days earlier in June, it's wrong – it's wrong. If you notice when the Government House Leader brought it in there was no explanation. Just hope it's going to pass on through.

I'm not going to speak any longer on it, Mr. Speaker, but I warn all Members and I warn the government also, that just because you have a slim majority, the House of Assembly is for all of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – all of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; not just the ones who happen to be on the Liberal side, but for all people. Once you deny the rights of individuals, Members in this House, and be able to change as you see fit, you're denying the rights of all of the people that we represent in this province, who, at times, may have issues to bring up and may not be able to because they're trying to close the House quicker already.

I'll end on that, Mr. Speaker, and I caution the House: To allow this on a regular basis, and even this time, to allow this to happen without going through the Standing Orders Committee, without having a proper change and just doing it because it's the whim of the government to get – as the Premier stated, he doesn't like being in this House – this House closed, at the end of it. It's shameful for this House to do that, to be able to just click your fingers and change things.

The people that we represent, if we're in here for a certain amount of time, we should represent them to the best of our ability. The minute that we give up the opportunity for any of us in Opposition to speak – and the government is going to deny that opportunity – I think democracy is not being served well.

I'll close on that statement. I just wanted to have that on the record.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wasn't planning on speaking to this, but my colleague has and he raises a very good point.

I've always said, since I've been an independent Member, as everybody knows, regardless of what the bill is, regardless of what the issue is, I always want to make sure that I record where I stand on each and every issue. It's there and it's in *Hansard*, the good and the bad. We all know about *Hansard*: There's stuff that can come back and haunt you. I can look back in 2011, I'm sure, at stuff I said I'm probably not too proud of today and can come back and haunt me. I've tried to do better, Mr. Speaker – tried to do better.

I do want to just say, and concur with my colleague here, that it's more about the principle. It's about the principle. If you can change this Standing Order today, what's to say that tomorrow we're not going to change something else? What's to say the every day the government can simply come in and basically scrap the *Standing Orders* and do whatever they feel like on any given day or any given time period to suit their agenda, whatever it is.

As the Member said, had the Government House Leader approached the parties and approached the independents and said, listen, we need to make this exception for today only and this is the reason why we're doing it, and if it was a legitimate reason or something like that, I'm sure we would try to co-operate and do it for a good reason.

To simply come in, just make these motions against the *Standing Orders* and just to do it on a whim with no explanation whatsoever, no logic – they may have a reason, but they haven't shared it with us. To simply do it because you can, I think is wrong.

As my colleague said, it's also wrong in the sense that, as he referenced that time – I don't know if it was the last sitting or the sitting before – when, as independents, we were left out of the discussion about what the plans were going to be for the week, and shutting down the House early and everything. They expected us to just simply go along with it and have no input, not be able to speak at all. Of course, we followed the rules at the time and we utilized the motion to shut down the House as an opportunity to speak about why we shouldn't be shutting down the House. What happened? As a result of that, next week the government comes

in and changes the rules that we can't do that again. Trying to shut us down is what it comes down to; trying to shut us down.

I'll say to every Member in this House, particularly the government: There's nobody shutting me down, I can tell you that. I will find a way to have my voice heard and I won't be shut down. The only agenda I'm interested in is the agenda of the people of Mount Pearl - Southlands who elected me. That's the agenda.

I'll conclude with that, Mr. Speaker, but I do want to, for the record, agree with my colleague that we are on a slippery slope. It is dangerous if we just start simply changing the rules of the game midway through a game for some unknown reason without any concurrence, without any input from other Members of the House.

For that reason – it's not going to matter, the government has their majority anyway, but I will not be voting for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had no intentions, and I'm not going to speak very long, I don't normally – I suppose not agree, but the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands and I don't always agree on everything, of course, but I'm fair person, too. When you make valid points – and I believe that everyone's voice and 40 Members in this House make a valid point – there's nothing wrong with standing up and being accountable. A lot more should do it. I agree with what he's saying. I do agree with what he's saying.

I'm not discouraged or disappointed that we don't have to hear a government PMR tomorrow. That doesn't bother me at all. That doesn't disappoint me one bit, because that's a lot to tolerate for an afternoon. Any Wednesday from 2 to 5, that's pretty painful, so I thank the government opposite for showing us that mercy.

If you're going to have *Standing Orders* – and I guess I'll revisit earlier in the month when I

spoke about the MCRC. Why do we have rules? Why do we make these rules? Why are we bringing these Committees together? We're bringing in rules and we're not respecting them. We're not respecting our Legislature.

I've been here long enough now that I can speak pretty comfortably on it. There are certain Orders: You can't say a Member is not in the House and you can't use their name. I can go on, a long list of these little etiquette things we follow. They're under *Standing Orders*. We do petitions here, but some ministers opposite have gotten into if they want to respond. They get a chance to respond; some, not all, have decided they just don't respond to petitions.

Why are we changing these rules when they're not being followed, they're not being respected. We have a job to do in here. The government has the majority and we sense that every day since the election. However they got it, they got it and we feel it across the way because there's a different tone. They're in power now, that's fine. They have the majority and we can't do anything about that. But they haven't got a majority over respect and respect for the Legislature, Mr. Speaker. No one has autonomy on that.

Go across the country, check what other provinces do. I'm hazarding to guess this is not a regular occurrence in most other legislatures. You change it on a whim, you change it at will, you change it when it suits you; you change the schedule, you change – these all stay *Standing Orders*.

What the independent Members are bringing up, they're making a very valid point. Again, I will say, I thank the Government House Leader for sparing us our PMR.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. PETTEN: We're very happy that he's willing to spare us that, but I think that it's time for government to start respecting these *Standing Orders*. Let's bring the Legislature back to what it's supposed to be; show some respect.

When we're in our rooms and we're preparing for sittings every day and we're looking down,

we take the *Standing Orders*. We have these books, the *Standing Orders* states this, the *Standing Orders* states that. We try to follow those rules because they are rules and we believe in them.

The government just comes in at will and arbitrarily decides: No, we're not going to follow them. We won't do this because whatever whim, whatever reason, whether it's the Premier don't want to be here or they don't want to deal with a PMR; whether they want to move on to something true. Again, I can't read their minds, but show some respect for the Legislature; have some respect.

I make one point, the final point, which kind of bugs me a bit, is this response to petitions. That's in our *Standing Orders*. We changed the *Standing Orders* to permit that, but now I find ministers over across the way are almost laughing at Members when they're presenting their petitions.

There is one thing I want to be on record as telling ministers that do that, any Member in this House, especially on this side that presents a petition, they're not presenting it for themselves, they're presenting it for the people in their districts, the people of this province, the people they represent; the people we all represent.

A very important point they need to remember, Mr. Speaker, it's not a slight against the Member in this seat, it's a slight against the people they represent. My opinion on this, in this final note, is respect the Legislature, respect the rules, respect the *Standing Orders* and that will make this Legislature much better because, right now, I do not feel that's what's happening.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's very important to speak on this particular matter. I'm going to add a few additional comments, but I do want to echo my colleagues from the independent world of this

House of Assembly who are making really good points, and the Member for Conception Bay South.

Certainly, here again, we are seeing a little bit of a pattern: no consultation and no explanation as to the plan. This is a very co-operative House and I think we all understand our roles; we all understand how we can contribute. We're legislators, we work with laws and we are here to do that in respect of each of our districts. Again, things are dropped on us and the Opposition. I consider myself – I'm not a part of government, sometimes I'm not a part of Opposition, I sit here as an independent MHA and I will go where it's best for my district and where it's best for Labrador and this province, and I will continue to do that.

I think it's also important for us to realize that the *Standing Orders*, as my colleague just indicated, are a reflection of all of those previous Assemblies before us. Here we are at the 50th in the history of government in this land and, yeah, for the sake of whatever agenda the Government House Leader and government has, we're going to forego Wednesday and the normal activities, which is private Members' resolution. I want to speak to this point.

It's interesting, last year and the year before, I had plenty of opportunity to lead several PMRs and there's a bit of an attitude, I think, that PMRs are a throwaway day. Well, I'm just going to remind this House of Assembly and anybody watching about just some of the PMRs that I've been a part of and seen, and then see how they even manifested themselves into the budget released yesterday by the Minister of Finance. These are not throwaway days. I'll just give you a few examples of some of the ones that I'm very familiar with.

One that's very near and dear to my heart we spoke about was – I believe it was last year; the days are starting to flow together – the will of this House of Assembly, of this government, of this province to get to net zero by 2050 – a very important topic. As we often say when we make decisions, we need to think seven generations out. It's that kind of foresight, that kind of thinking and the kinds of contribution that we had on that day that will formulate so much of how we're going to behave and act. You heard it

yourself in the statement yesterday by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change on moves around that move. How do we get to net zero?

Another very important one, and I've yet to hear the details on, but I heard there were monies identified yesterday around vaping. You might remember a very important PMR around how do we keep vaping out of the youth of our province?

SPEAKER: I remind the Member to stay relevant to the debate.

P. TRIMPER: Oh, I'm very relevant. I'm talking about the importance of the PMR, which is being circumvented by a motion by the Government House Leader.

Again, a very important topic, it manifested itself in the budget yesterday, I'm hoping it generates itself into some action by the legislation, but, again, wait to be seen. But, again, it underlines the importance of what we are planning to do tomorrow and as before us now decided that it's not that important.

Another was electrical vehicle adoption and the importance of EV chargers and so on. We are saying this every day, more and more and we saw this government responding to that. Another one we talked about was achieving an aspiration that was in *The Way Forward* about doubling food production. This entire House, everybody with an agricultural background, everybody with an interest in getting from 10 to 20 per cent, we all contributed and it made for a better place.

Another one you might remember, where we did change the orders because of the importance of the PMRs that we are deciding here to perhaps forgo tomorrow, was around our war veterans. That was the first time, I think, in the history of this Assembly, of this House where we actually, with complete consensus in this House, we agreed to go beyond 5 o'clock because of the importance of the PMR. We all needed to speak to what sacrifices had been made in the past and what it meant to us. We are just going to throw that away for whatever reason, I have yet to hear.

Perhaps the most relevant one that every single one of the MHAs in this room can talk about is the all-party mental health Committee that was struck by an NDP motion. It was before I became a Member of this honoured House, but it has grabbed us. It has been so powerful, all parties have come together and are going to continue to come together because of activity on a PMR on a Wednesday.

I don't know what to say, Mr. Speaker, but I must say that I'm not in favour of it and I don't see myself supporting it.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, if he speaks now he will close the debate.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank everybody for their contribution. Just so that everybody is clear here, this was a government PMR tomorrow. It was our decision to forgo the PMR to continue the budget discussion. This is a very important week. The Finance Minister – I was going to say stood for a little over an hour yesterday to deliver a budget. The Opposition critic will have his turn this afternoon for, I'm hearing, three-plus hours, which is good, Mr. Speaker. It is a part of the debate we wanted to continue.

The budget is the most important piece of legislation that this Legislature will entertain every year and we wanted to continue that debate tomorrow morning and into tomorrow afternoon. Mr. Speaker, that's why we made these changes.

I heard references above about consultation. Well, Mr. Speaker, there's not a Member over there that hasn't got my phone number and I just searched it and nobody called me to ask what the agenda for this House was this week. I spoke to the Opposition House Leader yesterday afternoon and I told him quite clearly, right over here, what we were going to do today with our PMR. He asked me what the plan was, I told him what the plan for the week was.

Next week, it's the Opposition's PMR and I'm sure that they'll go ahead with their PMR next week, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, I thank everybody for their contribution.

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: All those against, 'nay.'

SPEAKER: Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, first reading of Bill 19.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009 No. 2, Bill 19, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 19, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009 No. 2, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009 No. 2," carried. (Bill 19)

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009 No. 2. (Bill 19)

SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 19 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Securities Act, Bill 16, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. minister shall have leave to introduce Bill 16, An Act To Amend The Securities Act, and that the said bill should now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill,

“An Act To Amend The Securities Act,” carried.
(Bill 16)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Securities Act. (Bill 16)

SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 16 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2, 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. minister shall have leave to introduce Bill 15, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No 2 and that the said bill shall 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.’

Carried.

Motion, the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, “An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2,” carried. (Bill 15)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2. (Bill 15)

SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a first time.

When shall it be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 15 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Lotteries Act, Bill 18, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. minister shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Lotteries Act, Bill 18, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, “An Act To Amend The Lotteries Act,” carried. (Bill 18)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Lotteries Act. (Bill 18)

SPEAKER: The said bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 18 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to start off the budget response from the Official Opposition in an unusual way by reading into the record the names of the communities in my District of Stephenville - Port au Port. I know each and every one of these communities and the thousands of people who live there.

Before I do that, I want to address the issue of the recent COVID outbreak in my district. I know it's a very stressful time for so many people in our area right now. I want to wish all of those who have contracted COVID a speedy recovery, and those in isolation I hope you continue to be symptom-free.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: There are currently hundreds of children, families and education staff in isolation in the immediate area. Many families are already stating that they will not be sending their children to school in an effort to stop the spread of the outbreak and in keeping with the Public Health recommendations, which includes: stay home as much as possible, work from home where possible, stay within your household bubble as much as possible and wear a mask within a public indoor setting even when seated.

Gatherings are limited to only those in your bubble. Gyms, pools, fitness centres, group sports, arts and recreation activities are all closed. Restaurants are takeout only and retail stores are at 50 per cent capacity.

Parents, families and community members take these recommendations very seriously. They want to do everything possible to stop the spread of COVID in our communities. Given that the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District has online learning opportunities immediately available for times like this, we feel it would be in the best interests of the children to be able to avail of these measures.

By not moving to online learning or providing the option of online learning, the school district is creating an unfair educational environment for our children. Children in isolation for 14 days and the children who are being kept home to help stop the spread, will not have the same learning opportunities as those in the school; something that the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District guarantees for all students. Of course, this will also affect the children's school attendance.

I would ask the government and the minister who's now going to take over responsibility for the English School District, to actually ask the school board to reconsider this decision to keep the schools open. Again, let's look after our neighbours and our friends and make sure that all are safe.

Now, let me profile the communities in my district who are made up of good people, hard-working people, people with big hopes and dreams for their future and their families' future, people facing struggles and challenges just like others throughout our province. People in the communities such as Cape St. George, which includes De Grau, Red Brook, Marches Point, Kippens, Lourdes, Port au Port East, Port au Port West-Aguathuna-Felix Cove, Stephenville, Campbell's River, Fox Island River, Point au Mal, Boswarlos and Cold Brook.

I think everybody here is familiar with Cold Brook. I just want to make sure that the Minister of Transportation understands Cold Brook is only a one-kilometre road that needs paving and to quote him, I think it is \$300,000 for one kilometre. So \$300,000 and you could all drive out to Cold Brook this summer and enjoy a nice, flat paved road without having to worry about whether you're going to damage your car or not.

Noels Pond, another beautiful community, but you have to drive out there when it's not raining, because there's a potential that the bridge may be flooded over. Let's get that one looked at. Black Duck Brook, Winterhouse, Mainland, Piccadilly Head, Piccadilly Slant-Abrahams Cove, Sheaves Cove, Ship Cove, Lower Cove, Jerrys Nose, Three Rock Cove and West Bay.

Stephenville - Port au Port is one of the most beautiful parts of our extraordinary, beautiful province, so that's saying something. It is rich in potential: tourism potential, agricultural potential, fishing potential and other natural resource potential. A strategic location, a skilled population, with a strong work ethic and a determination to make our region survive and thrive. The region is full of talented young students eager to learn and rise to the full measure of their potential. It is full of parents proud of their children with big dreams for a secure future, hopefully, close to home. It is full of grandparents with families nearby or scattered here and there, but as close as a phone call or an email away.

This planet we live on is full of places like this; some of them thriving, some of them struggling to survive and some of them ghost towns with abandoned homes, like tombstones to mark what used to be. The choices that decide whether a particular region will live or die are often made by people far from those communities and may be people who have never set foot in that community and have no real idea of what it's like there, who lives there or what the true potential is.

Choices are made by so-called economic gurus, bureaucrats and important people sitting around fancy tables and tall buildings in big cities far from the people whose lives hang on the choices they make. In some jurisdictions, the choices that get made are sound choices based on bold thinking informed by a deep understanding of emerging opportunities and how to seize them, and motivated by a great faith in the potential of the people in the region to grow and lead, economically.

In other jurisdictions, the choices and the people making them are anything but bold and imaginative, anything but informed and aspirational. In other jurisdictions, towns die

because the people whose job it is to help them reach their true potential are just not up to the task. Sadly, when that happens, it's not the people around the table who suffer; they have their salaries, their pensions and their secure futures to fall back on after their time around the table is done. The ones who suffer are the ordinary, hard-working folk of places like Cape St. George, Kippens, Lourdes, Port au Port East, Port au Port West-Aguathuna-Felix Cove, Stephenville, Campbells Creek, Fox Island River-Point au Mal, Boswarlos, Cold Brook, Noels Pond, Black Duck Brook-Winterhouse, Mainland, Piccadilly Head, Piccadilly Slant-Abrahams Cove, Sheaves Cove, Ship Cove-Lower Cove-Jerry's Nose, Three Rock Cove and West Bay.

Newfoundland and Labrador endured a great resettlement once before. It was a policy fashioned by economic gurus around fancy tables and buildings in cities who quite likely never set foot in the communities whose houses were floated across the bays. Some believe it was a good policy to move those people closer to major services, so those services did not have to be disbursed at a great cost to the Treasury.

We're having those same conversations once again, just a few decades later, for the very same reasons. Do you know what's really sad? You only need to cast your glaze to places like Norway and Iceland, Denmark and Ireland and even the islands of Japan, to find places where geographical challenges similar to ours and they have found ways to make their economy work. In fact, we have resources that make us the envy of jurisdictions that are doing much better than us. Oh, what they would do if they had the strengths to draw on what we have. So why is it that other jurisdictions can make things work and drive growth in their regions while this province harvests its lumber to literally board up homes and shops?

Do we actually realize what wealth we possess in this province? We hear the lists rhymed off in virtually every Budget Speech and economic statement. The energy resources, the fishery resources, the forestry resources, the mining resources, the tourism resources, the hydro resources, the oil resources and the strategic location to boot, but what are we really doing to

drive job growth and economic expansion on the strength of these opportunities?

We are in the heat of a global, digital age when tech companies are booming and some of the brightest and most ambitious digital growth leaders in the world are based right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's a roaring industry that can sink down roots virtually anywhere and thrive; yet, the McKinsey and Mills reports told us that Newfoundland and Labrador is not graduating enough computer science professionals to fill the digital jobs we already have, let alone to grow this industry to its full potential. How did this happen? How are we going to fix it?

Who's going to dust off the specific economic growth opportunities identified in vivid detail in the McKinsey report that could bring prosperity and a new lease on life to places like Stephenville - Port au Port? Aviation, aerospace, aviation mechanics, aquaculture, energy, international education, agriculture, ocean technology, all industries that McKinsey said are capable of generating jobs and growth in Newfoundland and Labrador communities. We need the government to take the lead to drive this potential.

Where is the evidence of what's happened to the report? The Education Minister, of course, knows full well. He commissioned that report when he was Finance Minister. I'm not sure if he was able to persuade his Cabinet colleagues to drive the implementation of those recommendations.

The new Finance Minister is the one who drove the creation of the Oil and Gas Corporation, which Dame Moya now seems to want to dismantle. Where is the consistency? Where is the strategic planning? Who is looking five, 10, 20 years out to where we need to be and settling on an action plan to get us there? Does Newfoundland and Labrador face challenges? Absolutely we do.

One of them is the COVID pandemic that every region of the world is facing. Thank heavens for the good sense of our people to do what was needed to keep one another safe. Thank heavens for the health care workers, the service and retail workers, the truckers, the clerks, the cleaners

and others who laboured extra hard to get us through the worst of this. They did such an amazing job that Newfoundland and Labrador has weathered this challenge better than almost anyone, at least in terms of the health impact on our people.

We did not weather the economic impact very well. Tourism business and other small businesses have been decimated by the impact and some are not going to make it without help. I am glad to see the budget provide support through a Tourism and Hospitality Support Program to alleviate pressures experienced by COVID-19 and funding for assistance to small business and community organizations to help with increased costs and losses as a result of the pandemic.

COVID gets blamed for a lot of things that COVID didn't cause, such as our fiscal predicament; it only exposed the weaknesses that were already there. Another challenge is global oil prices, they slumped at the worst possible time for us because we were counting on our oil returns to cover hydro costs and then the oil process bottomed out. At one point, oil was technically worth less than zero because some sellers had to pay people to take their oil. That was another challenge that could have been faced with wisdom and strategic thinking.

Norway figured this out and incentivised exploration. When the global exploration pie was shrinking, Norway's incentives ensured they retained a monstrous slice of that shrinking pie. As a result, they have been able to weather the storm of decreased oil prices. Canada, on the other hand, did not have the benefit of the kind of astute leadership that Norway had. Our leaders ignored the pleas for incentives and the major growth sector of the country's poorest province was left with nothing.

At the time when exploration incentives could have lifted our province to sustainable growth on the strength of our own resources, Ottawa did nothing and the Liberal government of this province unfortunately let them. Let me quote directly from the Premier's Greene report: "The province has to move quickly to restart the oil and gas industry.... The current system is slow and unresponsive due to the uncertainty of the regulatory framework and local benefit

requirements. The province's approach to oil and gas development has resulted in a loss of value and revenue." This is one of the greatest failures of the Liberal government, both provincially and federally.

What was another challenge we faced? The cost overruns of Muskrat Falls. Before the Members opposite say Muskrat Falls was a colossally stupid idea, remember three things: the provincial Liberals actually supported Muskrat Falls development, as did the NDP; the federal Liberals also supported Muskrat Falls development, as did the federal Conservatives; and even Moya Greene supports Muskrat Falls and Gull Island development as a means of lifting our province to self-sufficiency.

Was the project mismanaged? Of course it was. The LeBlanc commission showed all of us what went wrong and how to avoid such a calamity next time. But our predicament is not solely due to that mismanagement, it's due to the fact that our partner in this national green energy project, the Government of Canada, has not stepped up to do its fair share to make this project affordable.

They cannot expect our people and ours alone to bear the burden of these extra costs, not when Ottawa facilitated the go-ahead of Muskrat Falls as a national energy initiative. They need to take an equity stake to make this project feasible and successful. This equity stake should not be dependent on the Atlantic Loop or on any future deals on hydro development; it needs to be dealt with now. Once we get rate mitigation out of the way, then we can talk about what we should do next.

There will be no more giveaways. We cannot be held ransom by the federal government or the Province of Quebec. Yet we've heard another budget and still there is no decision on rate mitigation while the people of the province wait to see what their power rates will be.

What's our fourth challenge we face? It's the gross unfairness of the federal transfer programs. In a federation of equals, where transfers are built into the fundamental document of the land, the Constitution, Ottawa is obligated to treat us fairly. They have reneged on their obligation to

our detriment, and the Members opposite have unfortunately left them off the hook.

If we had benefited from transfer reform, like the Liberals promised in 2015, we would not be in the fiscal predicament we're in. We would not have registered the deficits or debt borrowing we've seen. We would not have been nearly unable to make payroll. We would not have our backs up against the wall with threats of cuts and further tax hikes looming over our collective heads. Simply put, if the Trudeau Liberals had treated Newfoundland and Labrador fairly, as they promised and they were bound to do, we would be in an entirely different situation today. Liberal choices have caused the crisis we're in. That's the stark reality.

Once again, let me quote the Premier's Greene report: "There are challenges with the equalization system. The current formula used to calculate payments places Newfoundland and Labrador at a disadvantage compared to other provinces, largely owing to the treatment of natural resource revenue. These revenue streams are temporary and are in part owned by future generations. Other issues include the disproportionate weight given to larger provinces, namely Ontario and Québec, in establishing payment caps as well as a lack of sensitivity to changing circumstances, such as aging populations and the cost of service provision. The equalization formula will have to be revisited." That's directly from the Greene report.

She goes on to recommend that "The Provincial Government should continue to explore with the Federal Government and other provinces: The potential of establishing a new institutional federal loan facility that would replace the Bank of Canada's Provincial Bond Purchase Program, to enable provincial governments to borrow 10- and 30-year bonds at federal borrowing rates; Amending the Equalization program to remove revenues from non-renewable resources from the fiscal capacity cap; Changing the per capita approach to the Fiscal Stabilization Program, modifying the threshold for declines in non-resource revenues and revising how resource revenues are treated; and Modifying the Canada Health Transfer such that it provides a higher percentage of provincial and territorial health care expenditures."

If you sell off or strangle the goose that lays the golden eggs, don't get up in the morning wondering why there are no more golden eggs being laid. If you want golden eggs, take good care of the goose that lays them. The golden eggs this province needs so desperately are jobs and local successes that sustain growth and spinoffs for generations to come.

When the Premier hired Dame Moya, he actually wrote into her terms of reference a requirement that she also recommend some opportunities to grow. Her report sprinkled in a few motherhood statements about growing the green economy and looking at hydrogen, but there was little of real substance to balance against what appeared to be the true agenda, which was to cut public services, especially in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and peddle our assets on the street.

We, on this side of the House, have an entirely different vision. Where you are prepared to sell not just the furniture but also the walls of the house to pay the mortgage, we see these assets as tools to generate income. Not income through higher taxes but income through real growth, new investment dollars and commercial revenue streams. We need to be generating products and services that people can buy, and adding value so we can earn more profits per unit of labour.

Is this feasible to Newfoundland and Labrador? Of course, it is. Those who do not see the potential on how to capitalize on it should remove themselves from the decision-making process so that people with this kind of expertise and mindset can do what they do best. Finding ways to grow must be job one. We cannot cut or tax our way to growth. It just doesn't work. You must cultivate and nourish your way to growth.

There are entrepreneurs all over this province who have generated wealth benefiting not only themselves, but also their communities, through ingenuity and tenacity and the right kind of networking. We need these kinds of people in positions of leadership and influence in our province to drive real growth and bring the jobs and revenues here.

The McKinsey report was written by experts that identified opportunities with real world applications and bankable opportunities, the

ones we ought to pay attention to. The business world is a lot like the TV shows the *Dragons' Den* and *Shark Tank*, where people with money and business acumen judge the entrepreneurs pitching ideas and look hard at the credibility and bankability of those making the pitches.

We really can't afford to be amateurs at this. We need people who know what they're doing and command respect from investors and builders. What they respect most is not buzzwords or political spin, but hard-nosed facts and solid plans where all the numbers add up and make sense.

There's an enormous amount of capital circulating around the world and we need to capture only a small sliver of that, piece of that, to be sustainable. There are single cities that have economies larger than ours and populations larger than our countries, but that doesn't mean we're barely a blip on their radar. They start paying attention when they realize the wealth that's buried here. When they found out about the nickel, copper and cobalt of Voisey's Bay, they started paying attention. They already knew about the iron of Western Labrador and they're now noticing the rare earth elements of Eastern Labrador.

Others are noticing our ocean technology sector and the incredible things we're doing there. Verafin turned heads with the work it is doing in an entirely different field. None of these success would have happened without very good people to drive the vision. How many more opportunities are waiting for the right person to drive them?

What about international education, which McKinsey says is a gold mine? Are we really living up to our potential in that field of growth? What about the aviation mechanics, another McKinsey highlight that could give a new lease on life to our airport towns in a world that is about to rebound from COVID and take to the skies once again?

What about tourism? Are we doing the right things to get noticed in the markets where people have plenty of cash to spend on travel and are itching to get on the move again once the pandemic ends? Are we supporting local

enterprises so they are still here and ready to take visitors once the world starts moving again?

How much farther and deeper can we drive ocean technology by partnering far beyond our shores? Are we thinking globally enough? Are we driving this sector ambitiously enough? Or are we letting places like Halifax steal our thunder and reap the rewards?

How can we drive growth in our energy sector, instead of remaining mired in the endless hand-wringing over Muskrat Falls? Why aren't we doing more to explore the markets for clean energy that we could be supplying?

The United States now has a Democratic administration in office once again, and clean energy is something the Americans are hungry for. Here we have one of the best hydro resources on the continent, so rich, in fact, that Quebec pundits are openly talking about raiding their poor neighbour in our time of woe. Quebec certainly sees the opportunities in our hydro. Do the people around the Cabinet table upstairs see the opportunities with the same clarity and optimism?

The time for speculating about these things should be over. We need to be moving on these right now. There should be investments right now in this year's budget to get things happening in 2021; not just two, five or 10 years from now. We've been waiting for years already while jobs have been disappearing. The can has been kicked down the road so many times that we're running out of road. It's time to start growing and it's time to start standing up to Ottawa when it lets us down, which these days appears to be 24-7, 365.

We keep hearing that tearing down flags doesn't work. Well, you might want to acknowledge that whatever approach you're taking right now is definitely not working, because Ottawa does not appear to be listening. It is not on our side on Muskrat Falls equity or oil exploration or transfer payment fairness, which in total are costing us billions of dollars and thousands of sustainable, high-paying jobs.

This year's budget numbers testify to the federal unfairness we are enduring yet another year: revenue numbers smaller than they ought to be.

It's time to stop capitulating to those who hurt us, it's time to stop acting like we are not the red carpet for the federal Liberals to walk all over.

Co-operation cannot happen unless we come to the table with strength and solid proposals that are dignity intact. Our party is all about co-operating with Ottawa, whatever government is in office. If you don't believe that, then reread our Blue Books. Our platform called for a true federal-provincial partnership aimed at growing opportunities here through a targeted job and growth strategy to narrow the gap of disparity that has us at a widened disadvantage. Disparity is a phenomenon that the country's Constitution promises to protect us from. It's time to trigger the sections of the Constitution that every province has the right to trigger when they're in a situation like ours.

All of the talks of balancing the budget is absolutely useless and misdirected if there is no focus on the two things we need most to get back to balance: first, our fair share in this country; and, second, real economic growth measured by investment, profits and jobs. There will be no balance without fairness and growth. When we get our economy growing and private sector jobs on the rise, then there will be opportunities outside the public service for employees to transition to, leading to real attrition, which makes public service restructuring possible with minimum impacts on people and services.

The Stephenville - Port au Port region needs the same thing every other region needs, which is inspired leadership capable of seeing the opportunities, skilled enough to bring them to fruition, astute enough to make the right deals and dedicated enough to ensure these ventures benefit Newfoundland and Labrador first. We do not have the luxury of years to get things moving and we do not have the luxury of making colossal mistakes, such as selling our greatest assets cheap when we currently need to hold onto them to drive growth. This is not a fire sale, the province is not on the auction block.

There are Liberals opposite who openly or secretly agree with what I am saying. I challenge you to speak up because it's your province's future at stake and your district and your descendants. You were elected to do the right

thing, and gutting this place is not what you were elected to do. At this moment in history, you need to stand up for what's right and take a stand against those you believe are going the wrong way. Don't let your support in caucus be taken for granted. We are 40 Members here, and sometimes your own party gets it wrong and needs to be reigned in.

In a Parliament whose numbers are as tight as ours, you have the power to make huge mistakes from getting the rubber stamp. If you are convinced in your heart that there is a better way, that your region matters as much as mine and shutting down services and communities is not the right way to go, to let your conscience guide you in making the right decision.

What we needed in the budget yesterday was a clear sense of where we are going and how we're going to get there. That's exactly what was missing. Let me quote one line from the Budget Speech that was ironically a good title for the speech. The minister said: "There is an old expression 'The Fog Will Lift.'" Well, it certainly didn't lift in yesterday's budget.

People are left to wonder what's coming next. Will the HST be increased? I'm glad to hear the minister say today the answer to that is no; not this year, not next year, not the year after. Will ferry services be privatized or shut down? Will the Liquor Corporation be privatized? What about Marble Mountain? What government-owned real estate will be put up for sale? Will regional health authorities be merged? Will offshore equity stakes be sold? What will be done with Nalcor and the Oil and Gas Corporation that this government just formed?

What will happen to registries? What will be done with facilities management? What will happen to MUN and tuition? What will happen on rate mitigation? What will happen on the Atlantic Loop? These are all questions left unanswered by the 2021 budget.

Broader still, which of the Greene report recommendations is the government going to flat out reject and which are they actually considering? Who knows? What will pulling the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District into the Education Department mean for education? What will pulling the Newfoundland

and Labrador Centre for Health Information into the Health Department mean for that organization's work?

It was only in October of 2017 that the Minister of Health made a public announcement and issued a press release talking about the value of the Newfoundland Centre for Health Information and having it take over IT responsibilities for the province. Now, we're talking about rolling it back into the department.

What will the sugar tax look like? What will municipal regionalization and new kinds of local taxation look like? Who knows? This is the first budget following the recent general election. The first of a new General Assembly. Usually the first budget after a general election takes the first steps in implementing the agenda the government sought a mandate on in the election it just won. In fact, that's exactly how the Finance Minister set up the budget in announcing the date. She said it "sets direction to modernize and transform government, to improve service delivery, and to address financial concerns."

Right up until budget day the people of the province had no idea what was coming, and now we discover that we still have no idea what's coming. The only things we have clarity on after yesterday's budget is that, firstly, the government does not appear to have an economic growth plan to drive investment and job creation. That's now obvious and extremely disturbing, given the province's predicament. There is nothing we need more urgently than an economic growth plan.

Secondly, it is also clear that this government has no intention of holding Ottawa's feet to the fire, publicly at least, on fulfilling its obligations, some of which were spelled out quite clearly in the Greene report, like their failure to bring fairness to transfers. I encourage people, Members opposite, to take out the Greene report and go to the very last section. Read it, pin it up on your walls. If the Greene report does anything to this government's way of thinking, it needs to get them putting people before party and telling the Trudeau Liberals that their treatment of us is not good enough and we're not going to stand for it any longer.

Heading into the global pandemic there were several provinces in this country that were in positions of strong fiscal surplus with money to burn. Each and every one of those provinces was benefiting from rich federal transfers that have been denied to Newfoundland and Labrador. Here is what Ms. Greene said about that.

Request for Federal Funding Changes:

“Equalization is formula based, using economic and fiscal data. It is designed to address variations in provincial revenue-raising capacity to ensure all Canadians have access to comparable public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation. It does not take into account differences in expenditure needs or variations in the cost of public services in a particular jurisdiction. The equalization formula is usually reviewed every five years and was renewed in 2019. Newfoundland and Labrador has not received an equalization payment since 2007-08. The province has consistently requested changes to the program.

“The Federal Government introduced the Fiscal Capacity Cap to the equalization formula in 2007 and modified it in 2009. Under this cap, the combination of own-source fiscal capacity, which includes all revenue sources, and the equalization payment to any equalization-receiving province cannot exceed the fiscal capacity of the average of all equalization-receiving provinces. This fiscal cap has resulted in Newfoundland and Labrador no longer qualifying for equalization. Equalization is a fixed envelope, meaning that any increase in entitlement by one province means a decrease for another.

“There are challenges with the equalization system. The current formula used to calculate payments places Newfoundland and Labrador at a disadvantage compared to other provinces largely owing to the treatment of natural resource revenue. Other issues include the disproportionate weight given to larger provinces, namely Ontario and Québec, in establishing payment caps as well as a lack of sensitivity to changing circumstances such as aging populations and the cost-of-service provision. The equalization formula will have to be revisited.” Again, this is all from Moya Greene.

“Separate from equalization, the federal government funds a Fiscal Stabilization Program (FSP). Its purpose is to protect provinces from significant year-over-year declines in own-source revenues resulting from changes in economic activity. It does not protect provinces from revenue declines due to provincial decisions, such as reducing taxes. To qualify, non-resource revenues must decrease by at least 5 per cent year over year, and resource revenue by at least 50 per cent. Newfoundland and Labrador last qualified for a FSP payment in 2015-16” when they received \$8 million. “The Department of Finance projects that the province will not qualify for FSP payments in 2019-20 or 2020-21 under the current formula.

“The Provincial Government’s position is that the FSP, as structured, does not adequately protect the province from sharp declines in revenue, given its high reliance on resource revenue. Government also suggests that the threshold for non-resource revenues be reduced from 5 per cent to 3 per cent, and the threshold for resource revenues from 50 per cent to 40 per cent effective 2015-16; the per capita approach to the FSP formula should also be removed.

“Canada Health Transfers and Canada Social Transfers provide revenue of about \$800 million annually to Newfoundland and Labrador. The aim of the Canada Health Transfer is to provide long-term predictable funding for health care and to support the principles of the Canada Health Act: universality; comprehensiveness; portability; accessibility; and public administration. Canada Health Transfers are made on an equal per capita basis. The Canada Social Transfer is a federal block transfer to provide provinces and territories in support of post-secondary education, social assistance, social services, early childhood development and early learning and child care. The Canada Social Transfer is calculated on an equal per capita basis. A provincial/territorial analysis indicated that the federal Canada Health Transfer payments currently cover about 20 per cent of provincial/territorial health expenditures.”

To summarize Greene on this, transfers do not take into account our relative costs of service delivery. Transfers discriminate against provinces on the basis of their natural resources

and transfers unfairly cap what we can receive. Transfers are not flexible enough to respond to our needs and transfer reform is something the federal government has repeatedly refused to do.

She might have quantified the amount we're being shortchanged because it is in the billions. That matters, because billions is also the magnitude of our fiscal problem. If we were to receive our fair share in this country, our fiscal predicament would not be what it is. We would no longer be faced with an urgent crisis. We would be able to transform governance in our province without the threat of insolvency hanging over us like an axe.

When Seamus O'Regan and other Trudeau Liberals fault us for being responsible for our own fiscal mess, let them look in the mirror and reflect on what they've done and are continuing to do to us. She might also have faulted them for leaving us to deal with Muskrat Falls alone, instead of doing their part as partners on this national green energy project so our people are not left to bear the impact on their own.

The days for applauding Ottawa for their largesse need to end. We need to be standing together across party lines and demanding what's right and fair for Newfoundland and Labrador in this federation. There will never be any balanced budgets in this province while we remain at the losing end of a huge federal fiscal imbalance that benefits the neighbours in other provinces, like our neighbours in the Maritimes and, particularly, in Quebec, while we are left billions short. It is time to draw the line.

Now, I want to go through the budget a little bit point by point. Let's walk through the Budget Speech. It begins with a very bold introduction. "Today, we are announcing a plan with a measure of investments and savings to grow the economy and create jobs for a sustainable future. This budget sets direction to modernize and transform government, to improve service delivery, and to address our financial concerns."

When the speech is over, you're still waiting for what was just promised. Where is the plan with a measure of investments and savings to grow the economy and create jobs for a sustainable future? Where is the direction? Direction implies

clarity, but everybody walking away from the speech was left wondering what's coming next.

The minister talked about fiscal discipline when she said this: "It sets the course to achieve fiscal stability by ensuring our government spends within our means. We will introduce balanced budget legislation to ensure this and future governments are held to that requirement." What does that mean? There is no plan to achieve balance during the term of this government, so what kind of balanced budget legislation is she talking about and how would that work in tough years when there is not enough money to cover the cost? We are left with only questions, not answers.

The minister went on to talk about population and expenditure. Dame Moya, in her report, also talked about per capita spending, but, at the same time, she acknowledged that counting heads does not do justice to our needs. We have a thinning, aging and highly dispersed population, so our per capita needs are higher, which partly explains why our per capita costs are higher. We have lost young families because of the lack of jobs; that has made our per capita predicament even worse. Why is this government not making the case based on needs? This is the very argument we need to be making to Ottawa to get those fairness principles in transfer payments.

This section of the speech is also filled with passive language: "The Fog Will Lift"; "This too shall pass." Where is the active language? Why not say we will take command and drive our economy to growth using targeted strategies such as those laid out in the McKinsey report that is left to gather dust in the minister's office. The minister says the way forward is to take one step and another and another, but taking steps without a map to tell you where you need to go is a little better than sleepwalking.

The next thing we talked of was the financial landscape. Once again, the language is all about per capita spending rather than need. But the piece that is glaringly absent from the discussion of the financial landscape is federal transfers. Billions of dollars missing from our coffers because the formulas are unfair, and they are unfair in large part precisely because of the per capita formulas. Perhaps a discussion on

transfers was in the original budget draft and the people on the eighth floor edited it out – I don't know. The former Finance minister used to talk about the lack of fairness; Dame Moya talks about the lack of fairness. I don't understand why that language is absent from this budget when it is such an important part of the equation.

Multi-Year Targets: We have been trying for years to get this government to release its multi-year forecast and the details behind them to no avail. Dame Moya said: Such details are vital. Now, we see a brief reference to multi-year targets. But where are the details behind them? What are you planning to do to achieve them? Who knows? We are left to wonder if the only things being factored in are oil prices and exchange rates because these are the only details provided in that section.

Personal Income Tax: Once again, the Liberals are rolling out new and higher taxes. The line that they were unable to use in this year's budget is that there will be no new taxes or tax increases. That's a little bit ironic because they have been telling us we have a spending problem rather than a revenue problem, yet they are increasing revenue by raising taxes.

But then there is the line that worries people more: "We will also evaluate increases to the HST while we work to lessen the impact on the most vulnerable." Now, the minister today has said that HST will not be increased.

S. COADY: (Inaudible.)

T. WAKEHAM: You did say that, and we look forward to clarifying that tomorrow.

"We will also evaluate increases to the HST while we work to lessen the impact on the most vulnerable." So we'll have to get clarity tomorrow on that one.

The Liberals, who, in 2015, promised not to raise HST and then raised it anyway, along with more than 350 other taxes and fees, and now it appears again that they're poised to raise it. Perhaps, who knows? But the threat of an increase might also have a chilling effect. Once again, a government that says we don't have a revenue problem is planning to raise taxes.

Transforming Government: "There will be an accountability framework developed for departments, agencies, boards, commissions, as well as community agencies and all those that receive public monies. An accountability framework defines purpose, intended results as well as monitors and evaluates performance."

Again, you have to wonder why the government would need to start developing such an accountability framework considering that ABCs account for 60 per cent of government spending. The question is: Why isn't an accountability framework already in place? The Auditor General has certainly been calling for one for years, and actually the Liberal government were promising one years ago. Now, they're going to develop one.

Then there's the piece about reviewing Nalcor. Dame Moya actually recommended dismantling Nalcor along with the Oil and Gas Corporation that this government just created. Again, it looks like the government may not be ready to do just that, but, again, who knows?

They will immediately begin a reorganization; what that means is open to speculation. Will this cause disruption and chaos at the very time we need Nalcor to be driving energy opportunities to secure investment? The Nalcor reference also leaves some other unanswered questions. What about the Atlantic Loop? What about rate mitigation? What about the federal equity in the Muskrat Falls Project? What about pressing for federal offshore oil exploration incentives? There's no talk of any of these things, given how important they are at the moment.

Then the speech mentions putting the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information back into the Health Department. What will this mean for eHealth and Telehealth, which have become critical during COVID? Is this move going to improve service delivery or cause disruption? Will it save money or cost jobs?

Next, the speech talks about putting the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District into the Education Department. Again, we are left to ask: What will this achieve? Will it improve education for students or cause chaos? Will it save money or cost jobs?

Next, the speech talks vaguely about the regional health authority. It doesn't say what the government intends to do about them so we are left to ask whether this will improve patient outcomes or cause chaos? We can only imagine because the plan is left undefined. We did hear about the delivery of facilities management and provincial registry services differently. Again, we have to ask what this means. How many jobs are on the line?

We did talk about the health care and the fact that we're going to consolidate back-of-office functions. But back in 2017, the Minister of Health, at the time, issued a release that this was already started. This was confirmed again in '19-'20 in the report. Again, I question: What exactly are we adding now? What has not been done to date? What is left to do? How will that be rolled out?

Then we go on to talk about improving the delivery of ferry services while cutting costs. Again, we have to wonder what they mean by this. Some of these services are highly subsidized. How will they be profitable for private companies? Is the government actually setting this up to fail and then planning to end the subsidies and the services altogether? Which, of course, brings us back to resettlement.

Next, the speech talks about the tremendous investments the province has made "in real estate, offshore oil and gas projects, Marble Mountain, and in the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation." These are going to be reviewed. That's quite a collection of assets to be cobbled together in a sentence. Some of these assets are worth a fortune, and if sold will be never be recovered.

Selling offshore equity assets at a time when the oil markets are depressed is not going to bring us what these are really worth. Someone could end up making a windfall on the backs of the people of the province if oil prices recover, and future generations will regret what was done in the interest of generating quick cash. You can only sell an asset once, and we're not convinced that there is any strategic thinking behind this plan.

Let's skip down to the Health section where the solution offered to address the prevalence of chronic diseases in the province is a sugar tax.

Which sweetened beverages will be included and which will not? Is this going to make a major difference in addressing chronic disease?

Let's skip down to the Stronger Economy section. The first strategy under this section is a plea for people to buy local. That's good advice, but it's not an economic growth strategy. What about the measures to reduce the burden of red tape that the Mills report identified as being a huge problem for businesses?

I recently had a gentleman in my office who was applying for a permit. He told me he had to go through 12 different government departments in order to get that permit. Clearly, we have a problem with red tape. Clearly, we need to keep it so that people do not have obstruction when they want to do something in this province. What about measures to grow local economies so businesses will be spinoff beneficiaries?

Next, there is a list of economic success stories. We all know these stories, but the challenge is that there are not enough new opportunities to drive the momentum. As I said before, McKinsey and Mills pointed out that we are not graduating enough computer scientists to meet the local demand, let alone grow this sector to its full potential.

McKinsey said we need to be the leader in ocean technology, but under this administration we saw Dalhousie take the lead, and the headquarters for the new regional ocean technology institute is in Halifax. We cannot be losing ground in the sectors we're leading in. Are we doing enough to drive mining opportunities, to get the rare-earth elements and other products out of the ground and generate jobs and wealth?

On Oil and Gas, again, there is a need to light a fire under the less-than-helpful federal government. The speech talks of offshore opportunities like the industry is sailing along just fine, when in reality it is enduring an existential crisis brought on by federal policies that are antagonistic to oil. Canada needs to be following Norway's lead by offering incentive, as Noia requested. Here was the place in the speech to get tough on Trudeau and O'Regan. Perhaps that message was in the original draft and the Premier's people removed it, or perhaps

it is bad to say bad things about the Trudeau government, no matter how badly they treat us.

One thing is certain: Federal policies decided around the Trudeau Cabinet table are decimating one of the most important sectors of our economy and holding us back from thriving on the steam of our own strengths. That is utterly unacceptable.

The speech talks about tourism and air access. It even uses the words “air access,” but where is the announcement of an air access strategy to bring back the opportunities that have been lost? Why is there no mention of aircraft mechanics, which McKinsey identified as a major growth opportunity for Newfoundland and Labrador?

So many of McKinsey’s particular proposals for growth are missing from this document that we wonder why government spent a million dollars on it in the first place. Greene certainly didn’t offer up such plans in detail. Even the one she did offer about growing the green economy and hydrogen is sadly missing from this speech.

The speech talks about agriculture and promises to achieve 20 per cent food security by 2022. That’s just months away. Is this truly feasible? Where is the substantive help to get new farmers up and running and their enterprise capitalized and growing?

Sector by sector, industries are looking for the province to partner in some way so they can get up and running. McKinsey was all about identifying the winning opportunities so the government would make sound, bankable choices with the people’s money. There is so little in this budget on driving growth that we wonder if the government even acknowledges its role as a growth driver.

Where are the bold ideas to drive opportunities in Labrador?

The Budget Speech ends with the following:

“We will not falter
We will not hesitate
We will not fold when things are difficult ...”

But the budget actually does look like faltering, hesitating and folding. It falters by failing to set

clear directions for what it plans to do; it hesitates when it ought to be driving economic growth now; and it folds in the face of federal inaction on transfer payment fairness, hydro equity, rate mitigation and offshore exploration.

The last line of the speech of “CHANGE starts here,” but in reality this is an exercise in kicking the can down the road and hoping things get better on their own. That’s not what the province needs. This is a placeholder budget with axes being sharpened for cuts to come. The bold investments to grow jobs and economic activity are lacking, there is no strategy or vision to drive growth and McKinsey continues to gather dust. It’s another year of treading water, hoping the economy will grow on its own, and that’s not what Newfoundland and Labrador needs at this time.

I’d like to draw my remarks to a close by summarizing how important the budget cycle is and how significantly this particular budget misses the mark.

This province has been running on autopilot, basically, since the former premier announced his intention to retire. We have not had a strong economic plan in place in any budget since then, and, to be honest, there was no strong economic plan from the government prior to that either. The province has been losing ground steadily, even before COVID; losing jobs, losing people, losing revenue, losing transfers, losing out on opportunities and losing time to get things back on track. We cannot afford to keep sliding like this. We need hands with a firm grip on the wheel, guiding this province according to a sound plan that looks ahead five, 10 and 20 years from now. A plan with a real chance of getting us to where we need to be incrementally. That’s what this budget ought to have delivered, but it did not.

This Premier came to office without an economic plan. He appointed Dame Moya to deliver such a plan, but she did not. She delivered a plan for dicing and slicing, not a plan for cultivating, nurturing and reaping. We needed a growth plan; what we got defies all description.

The Greene plan is about deep cuts, or it may not be. We don’t know. It’s vague and

undefined. The can is bouncing down the road having been kicked far off into the distance. All the commentary about this year's budget is saying we don't know what we're seeing, and that's not leadership. Some are saying we dodged a bullet because what they most feared were deep cuts. They may be breathing a sigh of relief, but failing to grow is a little different from cutting.

Communities in my district are hungry for opportunity. A provincial government in lockstep with a proactive federal government is capable of leading the kind of growth our communities need. We could be thriving like Norway or Iceland; instead, we are slipping farther and farther behind. The Greene report ought to have been about growing our economy and jobs. It wasn't. Because it wasn't, and because there was no backup plan, we are left without any plan for growth in place whatsoever. We are left to lurch, toss to and from in stormy seas, waiting for the seas to calm down so we can hopefully drift to a safe harbour.

We have yet to see what this government will do with the Greene report. It may yet go down that frightening road of selling of the walls of the house to pay for the mortgage. Greene even takes an axe to the growth initiatives the government has already embarked on, such as the Oil and Gas Corporation. Greene acknowledges that oil has to be a huge part of the equation for growth. She faults Ottawa for denying our pleas for exploration incentives, the kind that Norway has successfully implemented, but then she wants to bring chaos to our energy sector by emptying out the cupboards for a yard sale. While energy prices are down, we're likely to be shortchanged. We ought to be following the lead of Norway, which took a different approach and eventually built the very legacy fund she wants to (inaudible).

Greene talks about green energy opportunities, but her ideas are mostly at an aspirational level rather than at a planning level. That's unfortunate. We don't have the luxury of years to figure out how to get our economy growing. We need plans to be working on right now.

In the absence on clear direction from Greene on growth, we suggest the government dust off the

two-year-old McKinsey report recommendations, which highlighted areas where our province has strategic advantages and things the government can do to get these sectors moving. These include aquaculture, which Greene would cut, and offshore oil, which Greene would also take an axe to. They include ocean technology and aviation, tourism and digital technology, education and skills development, mining, agriculture, forestry and more.

We would add in a requirement that the province implement a local benefits approach to development and bring Ottawa to the table as a partner to drive job growth and immigration. In fact, we would add many ideas fleshed out in our own Blue Book, which the government ought to read and take seriously. In contrast to the vague motherhood ideas of the Liberal red book, our Blue Book had specific suggestions that the government ought to consider as way to drive growth, diversification and job creation.

The government needs to take a hands-on role in driving growth rather than treating privatization as a panacea. We do believe in driving our private sector and partnering with the private sector wherever feasible to get projects moving, but it is not always the case that letting go of our assets will lead to greater growth. Sometimes it is necessary for the government to be at the table working to make things happen.

Across Canada and around the world governments have taken hands-on roles to drive innovation and industrial expansion. We've seen it with the aerospace industry in Quebec, the auto sector in Ontario and agriculture in the West. Our province is lagging the country and suffering from a widening disparity gap. That's not okay in the Canadian federation.

Ottawa has as active a role to play in narrowing that gap and helping us achieve our full potential in Confederation. We have all the strength and skills we need to sustain a thriving economy, but there are barriers blocking our path. Ottawa can help us remove those barriers and get our economy thriving. It ought to get involved in doing this now. Drive oil exploration with incentives now. Drive hydro with equity stakes and other investments now.

Step up now to keep Quebec from taking advantage of our weaknesses by using money it's gained from the unfair Upper Churchill contract to get a new unfair sweetheart deal from our province's resources. The federation has to help us make the most of those opportunities for our own benefit and protect us from being taken advantage of by our federation's partners.

When we read articles like the recent one from Quebec suggesting we are ripe for the picking and practically in fire sale mode, we ought to be more than just angry. We ought to be making a strong, coherent case for a different approach that puts us in the driver's seat in this province and not in the backseat of someone else's vehicle. The Atlantic Loop must never become a way for another province to gain from the weaknesses of another one. We are well advised to be weary and suspicious when we see thinkers in Quebec voicing the thoughts we have long suspected they were harbouring.

We do applaud Dame Moya for refusing to kowtow to the current administration and being willing to fault the government that appointed her for the actions they have taken or failed to take on their watch over the last six years. Kudos to her for calling it what it is, but on the general thrust of her report, we disagree on the fundamental principle. We believe Newfoundland and Labrador must grow its way out of the crisis. We must grow our economy and acting on the recommendation at the very end of the Greene report, on demanding our fair share from the government in Ottawa that has spent six years hurting us instead of helping us.

Driving growth and demanding fairness: This ought to have been the title of the 2021 Budget Speech. It would have been positive and aspirational, a rallying cry for a province that needs something to aspire to and work towards. It's not too late but time is ticking. We don't have the luxury of many more years and we definitely do not have the luxury of colossal errors in judgment like selling our best assets for a quick buck.

Let's think about our children, our communities and our collective future. Let's get this province on track to fairness and growth once again and discover what we're truly capable of becoming. Let's get to work on solutions and bring jobs,

growth and a fresh lease on life to the Newfoundland and Labrador we love.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do have to correct my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port. The NDP did not vote in favour of Muskrat Falls at the time.

The recent news of the bodies of 215 Indigenous children discovered on the grounds of a residential school in British Columbia is a horrific reminder of the tragedy of our colonial past, the residential school system and the urgent need for a meaningful reconciliation. We renew our calls for this government and all colonial governments to take meaningful steps towards reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

We cannot relate to the pain of those affected, who are reliving it in their communities, as result of last week's news, but we do encourage all people listening today to read the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We all need to do our part to educate ourselves on what has impacted our older Indigenous brothers and sisters for generations.

A budget is about setting priorities. It's about serving the needs of the people of the province, not a select few of those of privilege. It is not as clinical as solving a problem. The minister speaks of a balanced budget legislation, and on the surface it sounds reasonable, almost innocuous, like realignment, downsizing or restructuring – another term, double-speak. There will be unpleasant decisions and individuals will feel pain. A budget must also be about compassion and knowing that people's lives will be affected. It's clear from this that this budget has been prepared by individuals unaware of the struggles of everyday Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

My brother, Mike, was killed on the last day of school in 2009 as he was cycling home from

school, and I remember it vividly. I remember getting the news and I remember the emergency room doctor or surgeon coming to give us the news. He was clinical, barely made eye contact and kept referring to Mike as the patient. The doctor was matter of fact; the prognosis was clear, the need to remove him from life support was self-evident. We, his grieving family, on the other hand, were still grappling with the enormity of the news. It was his wife, Marsha, who interrupted their surgeon at one point to remind him that the patient had a name: Mike.

Now, I heard that same, detached tone in the Premier's statements last week when he was interviewed on NTV. To quote: "The only thing certain about Tuesday, I think, is that I'll be facing criticism one way or the other." Or in his comments about Memorial University, saying: It will have to decide what it wants to be when it grows up. Or in his justification for expanding the Cabinet by two: This is the right size and reflects the challenges, the opportunities, and, frankly, the agenda we plan to bring forward.

This is at a time when many fear the uncertainty of a jobless future, as anticipated in the PERT report. I'll speak about the PERT report, written by Dame Greene, a member of the British royalty, and a person who probably has little in common with the everyday person. I'll speak about it in relation to the budget because we can already see the influence of it in this budget; because it will set the course for future budgets; because it was shrouded in such secrecy; because it lacked consultation.

I realize that at the end of last week an invitation was sent out to the public to have its say through EngageNL, but it was too little, too late. It's a poor cousin of the open dialogue and transparent consultation that Health Accord NL continues to take in constructing its report, but that's probably because they're more interested in getting it right, because they care about the well-being of the people they are attempting to serve.

Mostly, I'll talk about PERT because in a number of areas Dame Greene totally misses the point and gets things plain wrong. She has her facts wrong and her recommendations, and any budget based on these recommendations are suspect.

Let's look at the social safety net, which she notes that "the province has unintentionally resulted in a high dependence on social programs. Programs need to prepare people for active participation in society and support everyone to realize their full potential." The social safety net, she goes on to say, "can create barriers to individuals and families from moving out of poverty."

It reminds me of the conversation I sometimes have with employers who say that CERB actually is making people lazy; they're not looking for work. As opposed to – as I'll turn it around – maybe you need to look at yourself if you're offering a decent wage and decent working conditions people wouldn't be so quick to stay on CERB. However, if we want people to realize their full potential and move them out of poverty, if we want better health outcomes, if we really want Newfoundland and Labrador to be one of the healthiest provinces by 2031, then pay people a living wage.

Now, a sugary drink tax is fine; however, it does nothing to make healthier food choices more readily available to those who need it. It's nothing more than a tax grab. If it doesn't at least bring down the price of milk or more nutritious alternatives, it's a tax grab. Tackling obesity and health requires support, programing and good food at good prices.

The Newfoundland and Labrador New Democratic Party has been calling for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage and we have recommended this to the Minister of Finance. By the time we get there, of course, it won't be enough to be a living wage. We also proposed a guaranteed-basic-income pilot project; however, there doesn't appear to be the political will for either of these ideas.

Prices of basic goods like food, gas, electricity and building supplies are all only increasing, yet wages remain the same. Now, according to the University of Toronto researcher Valerie Tarasuk: "Adults in a food-insecure household will burn up more than twice the health-care dollars over the course of a year than somebody who's food secure." I would suggest that many of us in this House here are food secure, and some famine resistant.

One in seven Newfoundland and Labrador families are food insecure and do not have access to enough nutrients. “According to the most recent Statistics Canada data, nearly 15 per cent of households across the province cannot afford reliable access to food.” Instead, here is what it was that her study found: “... it’s” – government’s – “policy decisions ... that directly affect food security levels to the greatest extent.

“In particular, a government’s position on minimum wage, social assistance payments, and low-income tax percentages had the most extreme impact on how much, and how well, underprivileged residents can afford to eat.”

I’ll compliment the fact that the lowest income tax bracket was not affected here; however, let’s take a look back at CERB payments when they were clawed back from those who were on income support. Those who used the CERB payments, guess what they were spending it on? Food. Once it was clawed back, it made life extremely difficult for those who were already food insecure.

Let’s be clear, what Dr. Tarasuk says: “For every dollar increase in minimum wage ... a household has a five per cent decrease in its chances of experiencing food insecurity.” There is your translation to achieving better health outcomes.

From the Health Accord Newfoundland and Labrador: “Healthy communities mean more than just caring for people after they have already become ill. We need to address poverty and food security by strengthening the social fabric of our communities and ensuring that people have access to affordable healthy food, warmth, and shelter.”

Please don’t give me the whole affordability issue. Lumber prices go through the roof; food goes up. I think someone was telling me that the price of a pack of chicken breasts and thighs has gone up to \$20 a pack, as a result of COVID, I guess, and we hear nothing from business groups or the Board of Trade about how it’s unaffordable. However, the mere mention of increasing minimum wage will send them into a shock and panic.

Moya Greene and the K-to-12 education system and the budget: Well, we already see that there’s going to be the integration of the school district into the Department of Education. That’s another nice way of saying, I guess, eliminating. We did something like this in 2013. There were four boards amalgamated into one. The jury is out as to whether that was effective or realized any cost savings. I doubt there was any cost-benefit analysis done of that, yet here we are glibly going along, assuming we’re going to get the benefits.

How will this corporate merger help schools? The issue is funding, and government holds the purse strings. I can tell you that the frustration of principals in the district in getting supports is because they do not hold the purse strings; it’s the government.

Sometimes we found, actually, that the district is a convenient shield for government. I can think of two metro area schools of the same size, both slated to close. One closes, the other doesn’t. One just doesn’t have the right clientele; the other had a minister batting for them.

The Budget Speech refers to modernizing junior high and high school curriculum and creating alignment with emerging workforce demands. Dame Greene speaks of the skills needed for the new economy, to emphasize math and computer science, including computer coding and artificial intelligence. Problems of connectivity and computers is the problem here though, because here’s the thing: we have Chromebooks in schools and yet I get a message from a teacher that said everyone has Chromebooks, but the school can’t afford the \$20,000 they need to upgrade the Wi-Fi in the system so that they can use them.

I always thought the K-to-12 system, though, was about nurturing critical thinking, problem solving, communication, creativity, collaboration and social and emotional intelligence, what Dame Greene refers to as soft skills. Every new government seems to want to modernize and reform education. I can’t begin to tell you how many times in my career we were told the system was broken and had to be repaired.

The system has changed. It has constantly evolved. I can tell you that in my career as a teacher it changed. It was not the same system at the end of my career as it was at the beginning. What Dame Greene has proposed is an updated industrial model of education, applying a business model to education. Basically, what she's done is put lipstick on a pig.

She references the OECD and the World Economic Forum in terms of talking about education. Let's get this clear: these are not educational institutions. The OECD's primary mission is to stimulate economic progress and world trade. The World Economic Forum is about engaging leaders in society to shape global, regional and industry agendas, yet this government seems to be following down the same pathways. These are not educational institutions. Find groups that can give you better information.

Memorial University – well, we can see according to *Budget 2021* that this will be the last year that government will provide funding to maintain the tuition freeze. Memorial has already announced that tuition will rise. Last week, I met virtually with a group of ESL students at Holy Heart. I met with them before; I taught at Holy Heart. I was interested in their thoughts on immigration because of the importance of immigration in building up our population.

I asked them what keeps them here in Newfoundland and Labrador – high school. When a lot of students I used to meet would say I can't wait to get out of this hole, they wanted to stay in Newfoundland. They had no intention of moving. The big thing they were saying was school. Just about the whole class is planning to pursue post-secondary education at Memorial University or at the CNA – just about every one of them. Education is important to their families. But what would be the impact if tuition increases or the selection of programs decreases? The university can't be everything to everyone. The implication for these new Canadians and their families is as simple as this: They have less of a reason to stay here.

I can tell you when I attended Memorial I had enough money from my summer job at the city parks to cover tuition and some textbooks; a

thousand dollars, that's what it was for a full year. It's gone up considerably. I'll tell you, at a minimum wage job you're still not going to be able to afford to pay for it. For these immigrant families, many of them have not been here long enough to build up adequate savings to get their kids through the system.

Historically, Memorial University has been a perfect tool in attracting new blood to this province from across the country and around the world. The trouble has always been government's ability to retain those people in our province. We are doing something, which is basically going to be discouraging people from staying here.

According to Dame Greene, Memorial University will be key in transitioning to the green economy; however, the budget, like Moya Greene, sends mixed messages. We talk about our focus on the green economy and the low-carbon transition, yet in this budget, \$40 million has been contributed to low carbon. At the time same time, they've allocated almost \$40 million to the Oil and Gas Corporation and an additional \$20 million for seismic testing. I have to question the priorities. On one hand, we're told that "Urgent effort needs to be devoted to studying all aspects of climate change," yet on the other hand, we see that we're basically doing the very opposite of it.

Here is my concern with this as well. We are told that oil will be around for many years to come, but recent world events would suggest that we had better be a little bit more circumspect about that. Last Wednesday, a court in the Netherlands ordered Royal Dutch Shell to slash its CO2 emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 instead of the 20 per cent. That includes emissions from its own operations and from the energy products it sells. Shell originally, as I said, planned to cut it by 20 per cent. ExxonMobil and Chevron saw their board of directors upended by climate activists and people who would see the companies move towards a greener form of energy. We have oil companies now removing the word "oil" from their names. It's coming. It's coming faster than we think and we had better be prepared.

Community-led economic development: "The Provincial Government should continue to

support and encourage local economic development initiatives that are community-led and that build on local and regional strengths,” so says the PERT report. Yet the Budget Speech notes the importance of marine services to coastal and remote communities but in the next sentence states, “ferries in the province are heavily subsidized, some as much as 95 per cent, and costing the people of the province more than \$80 million annually.” Now that sounds to me like a precursor of privatization, or worse, forced resettlement.

The question I have to ask this government: Will all communities survive or are you prepared to let some die on the vine? Will coastal and remote communities fall victim to balanced budget legislation? When asked yesterday on *On The Go* about ferry rate solutions, even Richard Alexander couldn't provide a concrete answer. Slick ads from the organization, but no solution as to what cuts will mean.

Look, we got here through the mismanagement of successive administrations. We have people who are struggling to make ends meet and who are concerned about the future of the province and their place within it. The government has called us to be bold and to think outside the box, yet what we've come to see out of this government so far amounts to nothing more than phoning in economic recovery plans using approaches that have been proven time and time again to be ineffective.

As I said in the beginning, a budget is about priorities, about people and about hope. There are other paths to economic recovery; we've seen one example brought to us by the People's Recovery report. Some of the best and brightest in their fields, who can still call this place home came together and produced a detailed analysis of how to proceed fairly. They weren't given access to government resources; they weren't given platforms like exclusive media availabilities to deliver their analysis. They weren't fed outdated reports from the Department of Finance to fit government's agenda. They came together and provided an alternative analysis that is more balanced and keeps people at the forefront of their recommendations.

The People's Recovery report is one example of being bold and pushing the status quo of governance. They recognize that government is not a business set up to the benefit of whomever has the government's ear and who donates most heavily to their political campaigns.

It's time to do things differently, put people first. Stop catering to the large profitable multinational corporations who demand more from us and will only turn around and sue us for more.

We have a bright future, that much is sure, but we don't owe that future to corporations who manipulated the political leaders of the province for decades to dance on command. Our future lies in its foundations and that foundation is its people.

Until government prioritizes all people in this province and recognize that we all have value, not just the people who have the ear of the government of the day, we, as the Third Party, will be here to ensure that people's voices are heard and their livelihoods are prioritized. People make this province and they will be the solution to our future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to represent the District of Bonavista once again and an opportunity to speak on their behalf this afternoon. There are 58 communities in the District of Bonavista and, not like my colleague before me, I won't name them all out but just to know that there are a significant number of communities.

I do not feel like a rookie, but two years, I guess, have given me that opportunity to be able to speak here, and I do appreciate every opportunity that I will get to do so.

I quickly realized that 20 minutes do not be long going, I'll try to broach two or three topics in my short address this afternoon.

In the budget, on page 21, it mentions about LSDs and unincorporated areas of our province paying their fair share of taxes. Most of us MHAs in this House have LSDs and unincorporated areas. I would just like to speak about our journey in the community of George's Brook-Milton as we were a local service district, whereas now we are the province's newest municipality, and what a difference it made.

I remember there was an hon. Member of this House that was probably in charge of that, he is here and would know that we had many discussions based on our progress from a local service district to a municipality. Let me share with you that journey, and if I can enlighten anybody or if there's anything that you would take exception to what I would say, I would love to hear it after.

A local service district has the responsibility of three controls: They will control and look after the fire services in the community, the water services and the garbage. That's the three. The water, the fire and the garbage, and they pay their fee. In George's Brook-Milton, before we became incorporated as a municipality, we paid \$750 a month.

Now, keep in mind, many of you live in a municipality, every tax that you pay outside of your municipal tax, we pay in local service districts. Just think about that for a second. Every tax that you pay, we, in local service districts, pay. The only difference would be what you pay for your municipal services.

We talk about the Transportation and Infrastructure trucks going through and passing through local service districts, and in some cases they may do some of the roads in a local service district.

We are now a municipality in George's Brook-Milton, so what is the difference now as a municipality? Well, 2.5 per cent of everyone who lived in a municipality, of the gas tax came back to the municipalities; it doesn't as LSDs. The portion of the gas tax that is given to your population does not go back to LSDs.

What difference did that make in George's Brook-Milton? Well, as a LSD, as a result of the provincial gas tax, we now get back \$16,000 a

year. You might say: Well, that's not a lot when we're looking at plowing the road, \$16,000 is not a lot. But because we're now a municipality, we get the gas tax back from the federal government as well, which equates, in George's Brook-Milton, a community of about 800 people, to \$40,000 a year back in our gas tax.

If you're doing the math on that now, you're up to \$56,000 that we didn't get as an LSD, that government had, but you living in the municipality, you do get it, it is returned.

We didn't get a Municipal Operating Grant as a local service district to help out our community. We never had the mandate to be a recreational area, so we didn't have that mandate. As a Municipal Operating Grant, we get about close to \$20,000 that will come in to help us now as the municipality; help us out with our affairs as a community.

If you're doing the math on that, you'll find that the math is adding up that all of a sudden local service districts, if they got what municipalities got and if it was given back from government, are much better off. In fact, if we add in 2.5 per cent of a utilities tax that does not go back to local service districts but come back to municipalities, then we're talking some significant dollars.

Case in point, George's Brook-Milton has a local service district, which became incorporated as a town in 2018. In January of 2019, our 2.5 per cent of the utility tax for Newfoundland Power came back to us and it is \$20,000 a year. As an LSD that does not come back to the community.

Where does the 2.5 per cent go? When we were an LSD that 2.5 per cent, which I just picked Newfoundland Power, \$20,000 goes directly back to government. We are now a municipality – it does. I see some heads nodding, and I know for certain, the only thing being I don't know what we receive in George's Brook-Milton based on the tech companies, but I know for a fact that it was \$20,000 for Newfoundland Power. It comes back to LSDs.

When it's all said and done, I would think it's probably close to \$130,000 that comes into the coffers that, as a municipality, George's Brook-

Milton did not get as a local service district. One would say, when you say we can plow roads, well, you can do a lot of plowing of the roads in George's Brook-Milton for \$130,000, that they never had a local service district that they now have as a municipality.

This government went around the province a short time ago and I think they might have had 10 centres where they transcended in the province. They had briefings on what the province and the government can do financially. I'm not sure what the titles of those meetings were, but one thing I can recall of those meetings is that in every one of 10 of them, the first suggestion that came out of those round tables and consultation meetings was that LSDs ought to pay their fair share; they're a drain on our coffers – nine out of 10. One out of 10 slipped into second place, and that's where they stated that it was LSDs.

I gave you the figures for George's Brook-Milton. I know, because before I ran in the first election in 2019, there was a group of us who brought George's Brook-Milton to incorporation, and we did it. Two of us became the mayor and the deputy mayor for a time before I ran in the 2019 election. Those were real numbers that we had.

For years, I taught in a school system with my colleagues in the municipality of adjacent Clarenville and took a lot of scorn and ridicule. In that scorn and ridicule, in all good jest, I felt bad for the plow going through the local service district of George's Brook-Milton. When I looked at the numbers and what the LSD wasn't getting, compared to if it was a municipality, that made a difference in my perspective.

I would throw out to you, as we read the report about local service districts having to pay their fair share, I would say to you I think of Lethbridge. Lethbridge and area has about 1,500 people along Route 230 – 1,500. The numbers I just gave you for George's Brook-Milton were a little less than 800; 786, I think, is what the census came in at, the last one that came.

If we look at that, that is a significant difference in the finances of a municipality and those of a local service district. Before you immediately look at it – and I'm sure that some people are

going to be checking the numbers here to find out what the difference is – there are a lot of financial resources that do not go to local service districts that go to municipalities. I would say to you, enough to look after the price, which we always go back to, of the plow that go through their communities. That is a perspective of which you can surely have a look at.

Some would say, well, LSDs – because we pay the same about as my colleague in Terra Nova and may use the facilities in Clarenville. It's a user-pay; we do that. We will use the facilities. But the people in Burgoyne's Cove, who are a local service district, when they have to wait an hour to get an ambulance because they're really remote and you wonder how much should they pay, are they a drain to the coffers in the province? I would say do that math, look at the numbers and if this government in their budget wisdom has here – and they are claiming that LSDs need to pay their fair share, then have a look at the numbers before you roll anything out.

My new mandate is the fisheries. I thoroughly enjoyed education and would still like to be in a conversation of education going forward, but I thought two areas that would represent the District of Bonavista would be tourism and fisheries. At least I can get a handle on those two portfolios and be able to relate to the people in those capacities.

In the fishery, in my desire to learn when we had the Speech from the Throne, I waited to see what was going to come out in the fisheries. We all acknowledge how important the fishery is to rural Newfoundland. I can see many colleagues around here; it's important to rural Newfoundland. Here is what was said in the Speech from the Throne. You won't be tested on this but if you were, just try to think how you would do.

“Our traditional industries will enjoy modern successes. All segments of the fishing industry, including the wild caught fishery, secondary processing and aquaculture, will benefit from collaborative opportunities with our growing technology sector and efforts to ensure it offers a prosperous and inclusive career path for Indigenous peoples, women, and young people.” Some good stuff there, but if you look at the importance of the fishery to Newfoundland and

Labrador, you might think that this might be a tad understated or under-represented.

In the Budget Speech that the hon. Member read yesterday, I was eagerly waiting to see what was going to come there in the fisheries. Again, to restate, it is significant; it is not where it should be. It means a lot but we do need to improve upon it. Just let me read what came out yesterday in the address from the Budget Speech, it won't take long: "Through collaborative efforts with stakeholders to build on and sustain these industries for the future, we are exploring opportunities with our growing technology sector and ensuring that the workforce is inclusive for Indigenous peoples, women and young people." A good thing. "Budget 2021 includes \$4 million for the Atlantic Fisheries Fund to help the seafood sector meet market demand for sustainably-sourced, high-quality fish and seafood products." I would say to you, I think this is as underwhelming in the Budget Speech as it was from the Throne Speech.

We look at the fishing industry and say that the fishing industry is the same as the tourism industry on value to the province. I think it might come to around \$1.2 billion, what is cited on two of those figures, what we have. So we think of the resource we have, the management of the resource and, probably most importantly, the voice for the fishery in the House of Assembly. I've been here two years, I haven't heard anything about an action plan or where we're heading or what we can do to improve or to expand upon our current fishery.

Right now, for example, our commercial catch is about 200,000 metric tons. That might not seem like a lot. That's a lot of product: 200,000 metric tons. It wasn't that long ago that we had 800,000 metric tons. In a meeting I had with one of the three big producers of fish products, they said surely they would open the plant in Port Union if they had product. They would open the plant in Port Union, which was closed due to Igor, if we had product.

Then you hear that the Senate Committee in 2012 did a study on the effect of seals. We have 7.6 million harp seals in our population. Not that long ago, it was a little over two million harp seals. The Senate Committee did a study, and

when they did a study in 2012, they brought in 50 experts; 50 experts stated in the Senate Committee in 2012 that the predation of seals is affecting the rebuilding of our stocks and the sustainability of our stocks. My read on the Senate report: There was nobody who objected to that. There was nobody that was in opposition to it. Fifty experts brought in; 50 agreed.

In fact, if you listen to some consultants and some consultant reports on the seal fishery – and I'm thinking about Bob Hardy. Bob released one in April. When Bob released it, in his study, he stated that seals consume 200,000 metric tons in six days. Think of that. Our commercial fishery is 200,000 metric tons. We fish when the weather presents itself. Seals, every day they're fishing. Every day they fish, 200,000 metric tons in six days. Here we are as a budget, saying: B'y, what can we grow? Where can we tap into a resource to say we can get a better return?

When we can say we're looking at the fishery, there is a lot we can do with the fishery. I know that it's sensitive. I know it's sensitive, but there has to be a way and there ought to be a voice to say: We need to look at seal predation, because seal predation is preventing our stocks from rebounding. Not from the MHA for the District of Bonavista, but the Bob Hardys, the 50 experts that were on the Senate panel would say the same thing. We need to get our act together. If it's federal control, we need to be voicing what is needed for us to have a fighting chance in rural Newfoundland to grow our fishery. If our fishery brings in – do the math – \$1 billion for 200,000 metric tons; six days it's eaten. Do the math and get us back to 800,000 and find out what our fishery is: \$4 billion.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, it's probably my first chance since the election to be able to get in and speak and thank the people of my district. I certainly would like to thank my campaign team, they've done a great job, obviously. For all the people that

knocked on the doors with me, drove the vehicles and drove to all the communities, again, I don't have as many as my partner from the District of Bonavista, but the District of Ferryland covers a vast area and a lot of communities and I'm not going to name them all, obviously. You do need people that are going to drive you there and take care of you while you're there, so I certainly thank all them.

Again, I'd like to thank my family, my wife Yvette, my two daughters Paige and Kaitlyn, my son-in-law Andrew and my grandson Ryder.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: I'd like to congratulate all the other people here in the House of Assembly as well on their election. We know how hard it is, everybody got their own districts that they have to try to cover so I'd like to congratulate everybody here on getting re-elected. I know how hard it is and what the election was like.

To touch on some of the things during the election, obviously, we know all the issues that we ran into. First of all, it was when we started knocking on doors during the winter. My first thought in speaking on the election, I think, my opinion, and everybody have their own I'm sure, that if we had legislation here that would nail down when the next election should be. I think in the course of the next four years that the date for the election should be trapped out or sent out, and be able to be voted on and we know when it is instead of somebody just jumping on it and changing it whenever they like.

I think in doing that, also, just from knocking on doors, and the first time knocking on doors in the winter – we're talking about seniors – I think it's a disadvantage for the seniors to be able to get out in the winter. I think it's something that we should look at. Everybody got their own suggestions, of course, but I think they should look at it and maybe move elections any time between May and October. It's good for the people that are running in the election; we can still do it in the winter, but the seniors are at a disadvantage in February, March and it started in January, obviously, when it first came out, but

they're at a disadvantage. To me, that's where it's too.

We all can get out there, and there are some people who didn't get to vote. There was a nice stretch there that people could get in. A lot of people left it to the last minute, they didn't get to vote. Sometimes the onus is on the voter as well, but for the seniors that don't have the technology. Everybody here had somebody that wanted to go out and cast their ballot. No, I'm not going to do it online, I'm going to go out and cast my ballot, and even to the last week they still didn't realize that they couldn't go out and vote and it wasn't going to happen.

I think it is something that should be looked at, you're doing election reform and I really think for the seniors, no one else, I really think it should be looked at and put that in consideration for those people that are trying to get out. I won't beat that to death.

There are some other rules when we were in the middle of election, and I'll come back, I'm not going to harp certain individuals, but when you're in the middle of an election and when it first starts off that you have to get some names – you have to get people to come down in a place like a takeout, you come down and you lay your driver's licence on the window, you take a picture, you send it off. Two days later, you find out that now you can just get a phone number and a name and phone them in.

My whole problem with that is – and I wrote an email to the person in charge – When did it change? Why didn't it come from the person that's in charge of doing the election? Why would they have to hear it from a second-hand person, second-hand information that, oh, you can do it this way. That didn't make any sense to me, it was frustrating. How long was it before we got that information? So that was a bit of an annoyance, I would think, in the election for everybody.

Not to get an email to tell you the rules have changed and all of a sudden you can take them over the phone. That was a bit discouraging I thought. Everybody wondered: Did I get enough names? Everybody is in the same boat. Not sure where it is; six or seven extra week, I don't even know how many extra weeks it was. It was 70

days, was what it was; 70 days to do an election. Even when you were finished, you weren't sure if you'd done it right or properly or got enough names or enough votes and it made it hard on everyone.

I'm not going to dwell on it too much, but I really think that's something that we should look at as Members in the House of Assembly, for the seniors alone, to not bring them out in February or March, April, because you just don't know the weather, I think is something that we should look at. I really do.

During the election everybody got stuff out the doors and I see some of it here in our budget as well today. You talk about child care and you're putting money into child care. Well, it's good to say you're putting money into child care and you're lowering the expenses for people, but when there's nowhere to put them is the problem. Somebody's going to have to invest and you're going to have to build buildings and they have to be under code. It's a big project to take on to build a facility for daycares and be able to put them in with certain rules and only being able to pay so much money to those workers that are there. So, hopefully, that's where some of that funding will go.

Being first hand, I have to say – and the guys are going to laugh at me now when I talk about daycare again because they think it's me, but it's my daughter, obviously. Yeah, I know you're laughing (inaudible). She had a part-time job as a teacher and finished in Easter. The person that was taking care of the grandson, she wasn't going at it anymore. She had nowhere to put him. There are no spots in the Town of Bay Bulls, Witless Bay, unless you come to town here to do it, and her job is going the other way, to be able to put him in daycare.

So it's nice to say we're going to put money there, but we have to put it in the right areas that can help these areas and to be able to take care of these kids. I'm in an area that, I'm going to say, grew pretty fast for the last five or six years it sort of went – I'm going to say, it stayed where it's to, but it's starting to go again now.

One of the things, if you don't realize it, when they're moving into an area just outside the City of St. John's is: What's the daycare and what are

the physical activities that you can do or what recreation programs do you have that are there for these kids? One good thing is that our minor hockey in the Goulds and in the Mobile area, the numbers have certainly come up. One time we had to join both associations to be able to make the program successful. But I think they could nearly do it themselves, on their one. One time you had too many for one team and not enough for two. Any outport community – and I sort of grew up with recreation – knows that's an issue unless you join some towns together. So that's certainly an issue for sure.

Another one of the things that I heard when I knocked on the doors was, obviously, family doctors. Yes, you're going to say, well Trepassy is a couple of hours away and they've been taken care of so far with the good help of the Health Department to make that viable and keep it going where the people don't have to drive all the way to the city, two hours, to get some help. I do congratulate them for that.

But in an areas like the Goulds, which is 15 minutes from here, they have a hard job to get a family doctor in the Goulds. So it's a rural issue, it's an issue everywhere and it's something that we have to put some time into. Whether it's speaking to the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port – people going into university and giving some sort of gratuity to be able to stay here for five years, or we'll give you back so much money after you spend five years here in your own province. If you're going to do that, I think it'd be a great idea. Something that keeps them here and gets them into communities and be able to help out the issue that we have for sure.

Some of the other things, I'm going to say roads, I'll touch on roads again in my district. I'm trying to reach as much stuff as I can. I look at the tourism as a big avenue and, hopefully, we'll be able to get to that this summer. I know there's an announcement coming today or tomorrow on our opening up. We have to do that safely, obviously, but tourism is very big in my area. It starts in Petty Harbour, and I don't want to name all the individual places because I'm going to miss one, so I'll just touch on some of the communities that are there. Petty Harbour is, I would say, one of the biggest districts that has the most visitors in this province. The Member for Bonavista is going to argue with me on that,

but I would think that they come into St. John's, and they can be in a spot that is a tourism spot that when you drive in there it just catches your eye. It's 10, 15 minutes from St. John's.

They get down in that community and they have all kinds of businesses down there, but the roads going into that community for tourism is something that should be looked at. We call again to get some cold patch put on the holes going down and it's in the same area. If we spend some money on that; I know that we have a budget that we're trying not to spend too much but there are areas that are servicing a lot of locals and a lot of tourism coming in, I think we have to take care of some of these places for sure.

Going down to these spots, and it's the same going through, leaving there and going right up the Southern Shore, Bay Bulls, Witless Bay, with tourism with boat tours. All these tour boats come in, most times they're out there, when the tour boats were here, before COVID hit, there were busloads of people that are coming up there to go out on these tour boats. It's pretty important to have that. It's something that we should be looking at.

When you work your way further you get up to Tors Cove, you get up to Cape Broyle where the kayaks are, you get up to Ferryland where you have the Colony of Avalon and you have the lighthouse.

I see everyone looking that way. I'm going to say it's a good thing my hearing is bad because I don't hear a thing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: I don't hear it so it's no issue for me. I see everybody looking so there must be something going on.

When you get to Cape Broyle where there's kayaking and Ferryland you have the Colony of Avalon, you have the lighthouse up there and there's so much more. You get up to Mistaken Point, you get to Trepassey.

I was speaking to a person in Trepassey that had school tours lined up to go to Mistaken Point. Obviously, the schools weren't from – I'm not

going to say from close to the shore, but outside the Trepassey area that they come up, they had a program set-up with different schools that they come up, stay at the hotel and go to Mistaken Point. You talk about a revenue generator that's there and looking at tourism, I thought that was a great. I thought that was a great idea.

Being at this only my second term, I'm going to say, I thought it was very interesting and I never thought on it like that, to see them to stretch it out, to make it something that helps their hotels in the area. I thought it was fantastic and I said what a great idea. Now, with COVID they're restricted with eight people being able to go to a hotel room, so all of that is sort of gone away for now. Hopefully, again, we get back to that and – well, you won't probably get back this year for the school year for the kids, but, hopefully, next year it's something that they will be able to utilize.

Also, in the district, some of the other things – again, the Member for Bonavista, I'm referencing him because he just spoke before me. You talk about the fishery. We were only down on the wharf on Saturday and I got some lobsters and the crab fishermen were on the go. It's a very big industry for anyone that doesn't see it in their district. I can go right along my district, start from Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove and go all the way up to St. Shott's. It's a big district up there. A person that's in St. Shott's is fishing out of St. Joseph's or over in St. Mary's. It's pretty vast to where they go.

I guess the one issue they did run into – and sometimes you blame everything on COVID and this is probably one of them – some of the fishermen have called me saying that they can only bring in 2,000, 3,000 pounds out of a quota of maybe 16,000. I'm going to say each quota is about 8,000 or 8,500, so say 16,000 or 17,000. They can go out and bring in 2,500 to 3,000 pounds on a trip. They might have enough if they have all of their pots to get 6,000 to 7,000, or it could 8,000, I don't know the exact number.

The problem is if you run into wind like you had last week or the last week and a half, or 10 days, then they don't get to go out at all, where the big boats can go out. So something that I would like to see some of these – and I'm going to say this

because some of the fisherman say that because all of the three big units are buying all of the crab, the smaller crab plants are sort of being weeded out and they're not getting this opportunity to be able to get some of this crab. We need to be able to expand on getting fish plants that can process some crab and not just bring it down to three or four groups, or two or three groups.

It's something that, from a concerned point of view, the fishermen will call. It's a big concern, and I can see it. They say we only get this opportunity to go out, it's a great day today, we go out and if we can get 6,000, why can't we bring it in? But, obviously, they can't process it due to COVID and the restrictions in the fish plant.

I can see the other side of it as well, but it's hard for them to grasp that because it's an opportunity for them to cut the trips in half to be able to get their crab. It's certainly something that should be looked at. Again, restrictions because of COVID are some of that area.

We had a major cleanup in our area two or three weeks ago and we had a couple of ministers come up and take part in helping them out a little bit. I did hear the minister do a Ministerial Statement today on the environment. I know that it's not in the budget, because we did speak while we were at the cleanup site, but I think it's something that the government should be looking at, picking at some of these areas to be able to clean up. In my district, I can name two or three roads – and we were pretty close to them – and this is not new garbage, let me get that out there. It's not the young people that caused this issue, just so people know.

I was involved; I went over one day, one afternoon, and helped clean up, but the gentleman that did it was Jeff Earle. He had some help from a construction company in Witless Bay, Ryan's Contracting; Pennecon itself was there as well. They were going in with a front-end loader and picking up vehicles in the woods. A chip wagon was one of them, right on the end by a dam, picked it up with the forks, drove it three, four or five kilometres out the road and put it in a pile. They came out and they put them in all in one pile. Newco came in – well, they were up there today and yesterday, I

think, cleaning it up to get all the garbage. They witnessed what was there, and this is sitting in the woods.

We had another couple of young guys, Trevor Croft and Jacob Hayden. They did by a hydro plant in Witless Bay and had a come-along in the woods with ropes; they dragged these 400 or 500 feet. There was no other way to get them. They didn't have a backhoe; they didn't have a wheel loader. They took the initiative to do it, so I have to give them credit. They came out with a full container load of metal from old vehicles that were there since the '60s, the '70s. There was no garbage in those vehicles because they were that long that all the seats and every bit of material is gone and everything is gone out of them. It was only metal that was left in these.

The ones that we did last week when the ministers came up to have a look at it, there was a lot of garbage there. These campers are sitting there. They squat them down; there's garbage everywhere. They did a great job of cleaning it up. We have a few more days to follow up, and that should be all cleaned up in that area. There are so many other roads that the government should look at.

I know there was an initiative, I'm going to say, 10 years ago. I think they cut it – and I don't know the exact date. *Hansard* might go back and quote me. I know that it was years ago that they did clean some of these pits up. It's time to get back and look at that again, because we have some that really need to be looked at. They're really environmentally not proper. That's all I'm going to say. It should not happen and they should be looked at.

Besides that, some of these are on Crown land, they're not on their own land. There are places with 10 and 12 buses left there with doors open. It's just an eyesore in the district and it should be looked at. Until the government wants to do that initiative, then it's never going to be cleaned up. I can sit here and preach about it all day, but until somebody on the government side wants to take that initiative and push it forward – as a person that used to work in Crown Lands a long while ago, he said, unless they want to do it, then you're just wasting your breath because they don't want to do it. I think it's something government should look at and there are lots of

areas that you can help these groups in some way be able to do that.

Also, touching on cleanup, we had a lot of cleanup days. I attended one in St. Shott's, I know that they had one in the Goulds this past weekend that I couldn't attend, and the one in Bay Bulls that I attend – well, I normally attend – in my home community that I wasn't home for. So they had two good cleanups. The Kinsmen in Witless Bay had another major cleanup that they do ever year. They do a major cleanup there every year in their communities and they get the families out and involved. Again, they do a great job. Right along the District of Ferryland, I'm going to say, each community has their own cleanup and it's good to see.

For all our Members, we should get out, and not just go out and stand up and get a picture taken, you should go out and get your gloves on and your boots on and get dirty and go get at it and help these communities, if you can, because it goes a long way. It puts pride in your own community, I will say that.

Also, the other one to touch on, because hopefully again these restrictions get lifted, we get a lot of calls – I know other people do – on weddings and the restrictions. Hopefully, with this new rule coming in and being able to host weddings and people have been able to have – they're starting to go a little bit more now, but they're a little restricted in regards to number of guests, and I'm going to say dancing. A lot of people can't wait to get back to that.

I will say for cellphone coverage, I know that there are a lot of areas in the province that are not touched yet and we're waiting to get it. My district being the same as everybody else's, I would say we have areas that are not done, but by the time we get them done they'll be moved on to new technology and it's going to be outdated, by the time we get it there. I think it'll be time for us to try to get on that as quick as we can.

With my time expiring, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: Before I call for the motion, I just want to remind Members, the Resource Committee will be meeting tonight at 6 p.m. in the Chamber here to discuss the Estimates of the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology. I also ask the Members to vacate their seats fairly rapidly so we can get the Chamber cleaned.

With that, I'll call for the motion for adjournment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House do now adjourn until 10 a.m. tomorrow, Wednesday.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.