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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.

Good afternoon everyone, first of all, in the Speaker's Gallery today, I would like to welcome Eve Roberts, Jessica Webb and Noah Foster. They are family of the late Edward Roberts, former Lieutenant-Governor and Member of the House of Assembly. They are visiting here today for a Member's statement.

Welcome!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also in the public gallery, I'd like to recognize Grade 11 social studies students from Gonzaga High School. They will be here joined by their teachers Mike Kinsella and Gill Brown.

Welcome!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Torngat Mountains, Bonavista, Placentia - St. Mary's, Humber - Bay of Islands, Lake Melville and St. John's East - Quidi Vidi with leave.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Boas Jarause served as vice-president of Labrador Inuit Association in the early '80s, the critical early days. He served on the LIA board of directors and as an advisor to the land claims negotiating team as well.

He lived in Hebron until 1959, then the entire community was gathered into the church and told they would be moved south to other communities. They told the community in church where they felt they couldn't speak up, this solidified his strength to fight for his people.

Relocated to Makkovik, he continued as a Moravian church chapel servant. His people and his religion kept him strong, even into old age and deteriorating health. Widowed too early, he kept his family together. Even in tragedy, he kept strong. His wife had fallen ill. They were medevaced to St. Anthony, as they approached the sun was rising, her life was slipping from her. He took her into his arms and sang: Come on to me you weary and I will give you rest.

The life of a true advocate, a noble leader and a vital member of the Labrador Inuit. No person was stronger in his faith and in his people. December 1, 2014, he passed away, my hero Mr. Boas Jarause.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

April 16, 2021, the District of Bonavista lost a great constituency assistant, Ang Chatman.

Ang loved her family first and foremost but a close second were the constituents of the District of Bonavista. She deeply loved her work and assisting those that came to her for assistance.

When Ang referred to constituents as friends, she was sincere. They may have come into the office with one issue to be resolved but Ang would often have assisted them in more than one after an in-depth conversation.

She was like a magnet in Bonavista with many visiting the office for assistance, and many visiting frequently because of how she made them feel and the friendship she had formed with them.

For those she felt needed something to eat, she provided a snack and gave them food to take with them.

Those who knew Ang knew she loved a good laugh. She had a devilish streak in her that was mischievous in a most humorous way. The stories I could share.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in paying tribute to a very dedicated constituency assistant who served the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador with love and professionalism for many, many years.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

On January 16 of this year, Wayne Power Sr. of Freshwater, Placentia Bay, not only celebrated his 68th birthday, but he marked 50 years of dedicated leadership and community service to the Placentia Volunteer Fire Department.

In January of 1972, Wayne joined the Freshwater Volunteer Fire Department. Seven years later, in 1979, he became the fire chief. He has guided the Placentia Volunteer Fire Department since the amalgamation of four municipalities in 1994. His firefighting career also included 21 years of service with the Argentia Fire Department at the United States naval facility.

Wayne's hard work, leadership and selfless dedication to his community helps protect the residents and businesses of Placentia and neighbouring communities. Wayne provides expert advice and guidance to his fellow firefighters, never seeking recognition for his countless hours of volunteerism.

Please join me as I congratulate Wayne Power Sr. on his 50-year milestone of service and commitment to the safety and protection of families, homes, businesses and community.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: During a time of tragedy, people accept their fate, but some want to ensure other families do not have to endure this fate. This is

so true for the Strowbridge and Langer families of Corner Brook.

When Mr. Strowbridge was in his final days of life, Mrs. Strowbridge couldn't be with her husband with whom she'd spent every night for 65 years. Another family experienced the same grief. So both families decided to ensure that other couples would not have this fate.

The families began fundraising from their homes for cuddle beds. They sold tickets, held bake sales, silent auctions, yard sales and received donations. With the great support, they raised over \$32,000 for two cuddle beds for the palliative care unit in Corner Brook.

The Strowbridge and Langer families turned their sadness into a positive venture by providing people, in their last days of their life, to feel the warmth and closeness of their loved ones and know they were not alone. What a great gesture of humanity, in honour of their loved ones, that will help others they will never meet.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking the Strowbridge and Langer families on this beautiful gesture of hope and love. Mrs. Strowbridge is so proud of their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

Elmer Lakata was 17 when he arrived in Labrador with the United States Air Force in 1954. He was stationed at a communications tower, relaying signals from Europe, when he met his wife Carol at a dance, five miles away at North West River.

Many years later, back in New York, Elmer started building miniature, mechanized dioramas representing memories from their time in Labrador. Requiring weeks to assemble, the scenes were typical of Them Days depicting trappers paddling a canoe, the cable car that

travelled across the river, or the locals stepping 'er down at a dance.

In 2009, as the automatons started to overtake their home, Elmer contacted Ernie McLean, president of the Labrador Heritage Society and former MHA, to see if their museum would display his creations. With an enthusiastic yes, the museum began accepting donations, often whenever the Lakatas travelled back to Labrador.

In September, I witnessed the unveiling of Elmer's latest creations; now bringing the total to over 100 at this unique showcase in North West River.

I would ask my colleagues to thank Elmer Lakata for his lifelong ingenuity and generosity, and invite all of you to the Labrador Heritage Museum to experience this amazing provincial treasure.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: By leave.

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

J. ABBOTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to honour a former constituent, Edward Roberts, who recently passed away at the age of 81.

A political leader, lawyer, businessman, historian and lifelong learner, Edward was born and raised in St. John's. At the age of 26, he was elected to this House of Assembly and, over four decades, he was re-elected six times before permanently retiring from politics in 1996 as minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Among his many accomplishments in government were the introduction of the provincial medicare program, construction of the

Health Sciences Centre and establishment of the Faculty of Medicine.

Following his career in politics, Edward was chairman of MUN's Board of Regents from 1997 to 2002. He was subsequently appointed Lieutenant-Governor in 2002 and is credited with making Government House more accessible to the public. Edward oversaw the creation of the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador and served as honorary chief of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and honorary Colonel of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.

Edward is survived by his wife Eve; daughters Catherine, Caroline, Jessica and Alison; and countless other family and friends.

Members, please join me in recognizing Edward Roberts – a steadfast Newfoundlander and Labradorian, exceptional individual and a man I was fortunate to have as a colleague and political mentor.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, ground search and rescue teams in Newfoundland and Labrador play a significant role in public safety. Regardless of the conditions, these volunteers step up when there is an emergency and people are in need of assistance.

In December 2021, we released the final report from the Inquiry Respecting Ground Search and Rescue for Lost and Missing Persons in Newfoundland and Labrador. The findings of this public inquiry will have long-lasting impacts for many years to come. Since the release of the report, our government has committed approximately \$1.8 million to the Newfoundland and Labrador Search and Rescue

Association. This includes the nearly \$1 million that was announced last week as part of *Budget 2022* and the \$775,000 provided at the end of 2021. The \$1.8 million is in addition to the current \$191,000 in annual funding provided to the Newfoundland and Labrador Search and Rescue Association. The significant investment will be used to implement the inquiry recommendations, as well as for purchasing equipment and training.

Speaker, we are committed to working with our partners to strengthen search and rescue in Newfoundland and Labrador, and we will continue to work on how best to implement the inquiry recommendations. I want to thank NLSARA for its continued partnership in this area.

Newfoundland and Labrador has a long history of volunteerism, and the system as it exists would not function without the efforts of these dedicated and trained ground search and rescue teams. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the search and rescue teams around the province for their hard work, dedication and commitment to our communities.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

Ground search and rescue teams in this province provide a critical emergency service. Volunteers are often called away from their family and loved ones to go in search for people who are lost, in distress, missing or experiencing another emergency. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the volunteers and supporters of ground search and rescue in this province.

Speaker, we are glad to see that this budget will provide funding to the Newfoundland and Labrador Search and Rescue Association which will allow volunteers to focus on providing their services, instead of constantly fundraising. I'd also like to take this moment to encourage the

timely implementation of all the recommendations of the Inquiry Respecting Ground Search and Rescue for Lost and Missing Persons in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement; also, volunteers in ground search and rescue who provide an invaluable public service; to Commissioner Igloliorte and Counsellor Geoff Budden for their professionalism and compassion shown during the inquiry.

We encourage the government to continue to invest in GSR so that volunteers don't have to fundraise for critical emergency equipment, and to ensure that volunteers are given adequate counselling and supports for the work that they do for us.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday my colleague asked the Liberal government to apologize to the people who have been insulted by their baffling graphic, which tries to justify the out-of-touch Liberal budget.

The minister further demonstrated how out of touch the Liberals are when he said: "We certainly won't apologize for trying to help people"

Speaker, the Liberals are trying, but they keep failing the people.

So will the Premier do the right thing, apologize for the graphic and direct his minister to rethink the cost-of-living plan to actually help the people of this province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

Certainly we are committed, as this government, to address the cost of living. I believe we did so in a holistic manner by trying to reach every sector of our province, every person of our province, Mr. Speaker. I won't apologize for trying to help seniors. I won't apologize for trying to help those most vulnerable. I won't apologize for helping those on fixed income. I won't apologize for those who drive a car. I won't apologize for those who pay tax on their insurance, Mr. Speaker.

I believe this is a holistic approach. The graphic missed the mark, no doubt, but I won't apologize for what this budget represents in addressing the cost of living, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There would have been less to apologize for had he offered a home-heat rebate –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: – a break at the pumps, a plan for affordable food and a tax break to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Speaker, yesterday, the Premier gave \$600,000 to NASCAR Pinty's Series to come to Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the Premier: How many nurses could be hired a year for \$600,000?

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

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

I would have hoped that the Member opposite would appreciate the value of our tourism and hospitality industry in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: I had the opportunity this morning to sit in Estimates for almost three hours with the Member from Bonavista. Mr. Speaker, maybe him and his leader should have a conversation, because he gets it. He understands that this is an investment. This investment for \$600,000 over three years will buy us a marketing opportunity, first and foremost, Mr. Speaker. It will bring in over \$5 million estimated by Destination St. John's who are very much in favour of this, Mr. Speaker.

Does the Member opposite realize that if we have \$1 billion in tourism and hospitality in this province, that equates to HST alone of \$150 million, Mr. Speaker?

Get on the same page over there, I say, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nobody other than this side of the House have realized the value of the tourism industry. But I ask the minister: Does he realize the 100,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians don't have a doctor?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: The backlog in surgeries that can't be done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

D. BRAZIL: The nurses and doctors and paramedics who are overworked in this province, Mr. Speaker. That's what I ask the minister to realize is happening here.

Speaker, plenty of people enjoy a good auto race, but 100,000 people in our province are without a family doctor.

I ask the Premier: How many doctors could be hired in rural Newfoundland and Labrador for \$600,000?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

I would remind the Member opposite how many doctors and nurses and hospitals could we build and employed for \$500 million dollars a year, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER A. FUREY: So I'll tell you, an investment of \$600,000 over three years to pay dividends of \$5.4 million and support our hard-working people in the tourism and hospitality industry is a wise investment. I wish I could say the same about the other investment annually.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

But the Premier forgets he's the one who touted Muskrat Falls will be the cornerstone for economic development for Newfoundland and Labrador with the Atlantic Loop. He went to Halifax, he had a chat with the Atlantic premiers and they all agreed this would be the stepping stone for economic growth, particularly around hydroelectric green energy in Newfoundland and Labrador, and for the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!
The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

Again and again we see how out of touch with reality this government is. Five doctors are leaving Central Newfoundland and Labrador by June, yet the Premier is worried about opening an office for his political friends in the region. People can't afford to heat their homes or buy food for their families, yet let's give \$5 million to the Rothschild.

I ask the Premier: When will you face the reality facing the citizens of this province and look at health care and cost of living needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it's a privilege to answer this question.

We have been addressing that since day one. We started with a \$2.1 billion deficit. We're able to address health care concerns while bringing that deficit down to a projected \$353 million, Mr. Speaker. We're doing our best. We're on tight fiscal timelines but we are addressing this and we're doing it by collecting evidence first. That was the approach from the Health Accord NL, we involved all stakeholders across the province.

I have said many times in this House now is the time, as we emerge from this pandemic, to reinvest and reimagine our health care system, to use what we have discovered in this time of disruption to better the delivery of services around the province.

The old paradigms aren't going to work. It is easy politics. It is easy for them to say, but we need a new system and we're committed to developing that. It is not going to happen overnight, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's good to make promises but reality is in what you do at the end of the day. People are still without proper health care. People are leaving Newfoundland and Labrador and people are losing hope. We're asking this government, we want to work collaboratively here. We want to help solve the health care crisis in Newfoundland and Labrador. We want young people to be able to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

D. BRAZIL: Let's work collaboratively here. Let's be open to the needs of the people. Let's not spend money where it shouldn't be spent.

Thank you, Speaker.

This morning one senior called into the public airways and said that the cost of living is getting so high that seniors will only be able to afford – and I quote – to sit in the chair and don't move. Those are her words.

Speaker, this budget does not improve the quality of life for the people in this province. The budget does not improve health care outcomes. It does not allow people to afford to live their lives. The Premier said that the cost of living was a start.

I ask the Premier: When will he fix this mess and lower the cost of living for the people of this province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Speaker.

I will remind the Member that we have increased the seniors' supplement in this year's budget by 10 per cent. We have increased the Income Supplement by 10 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the benefits that we have put in place in this year's budget are considerable. It's a considerable amount of money that we have invested to put money directly back into the pockets, including the tax on home insurance, which most seniors who own their own homes

would be able to avail of and registration on vehicles, Mr. Speaker. So we've been listening.

We have a budget that we have to operate within. We have been operating within that budget and providing benefits back to the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we have heard lots about what they had done and how that works out to about \$11 a month. That is small comfort to a senior who is paying more than \$400 a month extra to heat their homes.

Speaker, the minister said in her budget last week that there would be no new taxes.

I ask the minister: Does that mean the sugar tax is scrapped?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I believe that tax was announced in last year's budget. Furthermore, we all know that this province has the highest rates of diabetes of our population across the country. It's not only beneficial to our health care budget, but the health outcomes for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, unfortunately, I don't think the evidence supports what the minister had just said about the sugar tax.

I will talk briefly choices. Let's talk about priorities. Let's talk about the fact that people in my district spend \$35 a visit to visit a nurse practitioner. So if you want to talk about what \$600,000 will get you, let me tell you what it will get you: 17,000 visits to a nurse practitioner.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I ask the minister: Do you think NASCAR is more important than the people who have to pay for health care in this province?

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

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I can't let the opportunity go by again. They keep referencing the \$600,000 over three years that we've invested into our agreement with NASCAR. That's going to buy marketing. That's from our marketing budget in Tourism, that's a part of our program. That \$600,000 is estimated to bring in \$5.6 million. They're not my numbers, they're the numbers of Destination St. John's.

The Member opposite should've taken some time yesterday to listen to the remarks from Destination St. John's about the economic activity this is going to create. The Member for Harbour Main is going to have 10,000 people over that weekend visit her district.

Mr. Speaker, that is economic activity. In any business, you have to buy a product to sell a product.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, as my colleague said, let's hope that none of them have to visit any of our hospitals, because we certainly won't have any room to get in.

Let me talk about that. The minister talks about their investment. It's great to talk about that investment. But what about investing in health care and the people who are paying for their health care services.

I simply ask: When are you going to deal with the fact that people are paying to get a nurse practitioner in this province?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I would point to the \$400 million in the budget this year, which is the increase in health care expenditure – \$3.2 billion to \$3.6 billion. I would point to last year's announcements of \$30 million to recruit and retain health care providers specifically targeted at family physicians, \$100,000 each in return for staying five years and a minimum income guarantee. For the \$14 million in this year's budget for primary care alone, we have just negotiated a \$36-million pay raise for our 13,000 physicians. That's investments.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

The minister is out of touch. Seven years later and we're still a mess. Health care has never been so bad.

Speaker, residents of Baie Verte and La Scie are driving over some of the worst roads in Atlantic Canada as documented by the annual CAA's Worst Roads in Canada report. After years of neglect by this government, the minister has suddenly provided verbal commitments to the community leaders to pave millions of dollars worth of roads in the next few years. This was all announced not in a government press release but in a Facebook post by a private individual.

I ask the minister: Where is the five-year roads plan that outlines these expenditures?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I make no apologies for communicating with people in the local area which is represented by one of the greatest MHAs around and, yes, he faces challenges in terms of roadwork like many districts in the province. I'm working within a fiscal envelope within the roads plan and the roads plan will be coming out shortly, Mr. Speaker, that will include investment in this hon.

Member's district and other districts in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And the minister needs to be reminded. Yesterday, I talked about \$150 million just going out the door. Now it's extra money in roads. We're getting \$10 million, I believe, increase in the budget, but he's going out on the side of the road and agreeing and patting people on the back, winking at them, you're getting your road done. This is the roads program. This is the new politics-out-of-paving plan they came out with – now, really?

Speaker, we are happy for the residents of Baie Verte Peninsula – we all are – who hope after seven years of neglect by the minister is finally going to deliver. However, residents in Roddickton, Terra Nova, Witless Bay, Colinet, Harbour Main and Route 60 are also waiting for the minister to provide a verbal commitment.

Has the lapsed five-year Roads Plan has been replaced by wink, smiles and calls from the minister?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't make any apologies for doing due diligence on a roads plan, Mr. Speaker, because there are many challenges. But, you know what, I'm more worried about satisfying the Construction Association, and they're satisfied with what we're doing. We're out with some new tenders, early tenders that they asked for.

I'm not so concerned about what he's satisfied with. I'm more concerned about what the industry is and we're doing a good job. It'll be a good season this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: That's troubling, Mr. Speaker. The minister is more concerned about satisfying companies instead of the people of this province who are driving over roads that are not fit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: People are crying out to meet with the minister and he won't answer their calls and he's more worried about the construction company than the people of this province. It speaks volumes, Mr. Speaker – speaks volumes.

AN HON. MEMBER: His words.

B. PETTEN: And it's his words, that's right.

Speaker, yesterday, the minister boasted about due diligence with a blank cheque for a new penitentiary.

Can the minister stand and table his due diligence on road paving including analysis, evaluation, ranking of roads by his department, or does the plan flow from whoever he talked to last?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sometimes the comments from the Member are unbelievable. In terms of the roads plan, there are challenges in developing a roads plan because there are a lot of challenges in the province. I don't govern the roads plan by a CAA survey, I'll let the Member know. I do it by the professionals that are in the department –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Again, I don't want Members talking across the floor.

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you for the protection.

The Member is eager to ask the question, but he doesn't listen to it. So that's a big problem as well.

The roads plan is coming and I'll be glad to roll it out, and the companies in this province will be doing work, employing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, to create a good road system for this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

A request for proposals closed last week, commissioned by the Minister of Health, to research issues with staffing in our health care system.

I ask the minister: How much money will be spent on this study?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

From memory, I think that RFP was valued at no more than \$50,000. I don't know what the successful proponent is. The closing date, again from memory, was either the 8th or the 9th of April. Staff in the department will be evaluating that and awarding that in short order.

This is important work to determine changes in style and preference of workforce, not just of physicians, but of RNs and other health care providers, too. It will help our new ADM of recruitment determine the best course of action as we get on the national stage, seeking employees for our health care system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Minister of Health has had seven years to understand these issues.

AN HON. MEMBER: He was only a young man.

P. DINN: He was very young when he came in.

Maybe if he considered listening to front-line health care workers, maybe if he tried to understand their needs, maybe we wouldn't need this study.

I ask the minister: Why are you spending time on studies when you should be taking immediate action to help our front-line health care workers?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I would like to point out that in July and September of last year, the new increase in seats for PCA students produced two graduates. Those were put in place 2½ years ago. We have a new excess graduating class of LPNs, all of which in the Central Region were hired by Central Health to work in Central Health facilities to provide care where they grew up and trained.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: Those decisions were not made today, they were not made yesterday; they were made years ago. In 2017 we graduated the first increased class of Memorial Medical School graduates, a 30 per cent increase on the number of doctors. We have plans next year to increase nursing graduates by 25 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It seems to be a bit of a contradiction here because the Premier just moments ago said that they like collecting evidence first before making decisions, yet we're getting the opposite over here.

Speaker, the government commissioned the Health Accord. They spent \$5 million on Rothschild, they hired an American company to come in and recommend ways to cut spending in our health care system and now we need another study. And people out there are telling us that there's nothing happening now that addresses the immediate needs of our health care workers and our health care patients.

So I ask the minister: How much research do you need to understand our health care system needs more front-line health care workers?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Going back to my previous reply, those measures were put in place a long time ago. A 2017 graduating class takes some years to get to graduate. That was not yesterday. Similarly, with the increase in LPNs and PCAs.

We have introduced an advanced care paramedic course in this province for the first time ever. We've graduated one class and the next intake will double that size. We are set to increase, year over year, the number of primary care paramedics by 25 per year to meet expected demand. These did not happen overnight. This research is to make a good plan even better, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association is sounding the alarm about five physicians due to retire throughout Central Newfoundland and Labrador at the end of June. Glad to see the new Premier's office is getting her done, but anyway. This means a huge swath of our province from Fogo to Harbour Breton to Buchans are being left behind thanks to the inaction of this government on health care recruitment.

I ask the minister: Will the health care clinics these physicians are leaving just close their doors by June?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

What the Member opposite failed to point out is that Central Health has actually recruited 36 new physicians over the last two years. That is not to say there isn't a gap and more have moved than have been recruited. Of interest to the rest of the House is that the majority of those have actually moved elsewhere in the province. So they are not a net loss to the province.

From our point of view, the CEO of Central Health will be meeting with the community leaders in those areas tomorrow. There are mitigation measures in place, including virtual ER hubs based in Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor. We've announced in the budget a further \$3 million to expand virtual ER services as a short-term measure.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

C. TIBBS: If we have had more doctors in the past two years, explain that to the people that don't have a doctor because there's more people that don't have doctors in Central Newfoundland and Labrador than did two years ago. So those numbers just don't add up for some reason or another.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Speaker, the minister loves to talk about virtual emergency rooms. A virtual emergency room does not replace a family doctor. Period.

I ask the minister: What are you going to do to help the people from Fogo Island to Buchans to Bishop's Falls to Harbour Breton who are worried about access to health care?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Going back to the time when I first arrived in Newfoundland and Labrador, rural physicians, by and large, 75 per cent of them will stay in a rural community for two years and move. That has always been that pattern; it is still the same today. It presents considerable challenges, despite paying premiums for rural, remote and isolated areas.

For the Member's benefit opposite, we currently, according to the College of Physicians and Surgeons – not my numbers – the college has 680 primary care physicians in this province. That is almost the entire membership number of the NLMA 20 years ago.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, a health care crisis is unfolding in Central Newfoundland, but it's not contained there. The people of South River in the District of Harbour Main are also set to lose their physician in June. It's not just South River, but hundreds of families throughout the area will have nowhere to turn for their health care needs.

I ask the minister: When can the people of South River and surrounding communities expect a new physician?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Health Accord has recommended, indeed confirmed, our approach of using collaborative team clinics. My understanding in actual fact from Eastern Health is that the Member opposite's district, in actual fact the community of Holyrood, might actually be a hub for such of these.

Discussions are underway between VPs rural and the communities to see if that's what they

need and that's what they would like. As soon as those discussions are concluded, our new ADM of Recruitment and Retention will be looking at how best to staff those

Given the response to the collaborative team clinics in St. John's where, for the first time in 20 years, we actually had competitive interviews, I am really optimistic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, I am hearing from constituents who do not have a physician as of the end of June in South River and the surrounding area. So this just addresses the issue that government is truly out of touch with reality. Even the president of the Medical Association said yesterday the whole health care system is in crisis and does not understand why this minister isn't yelling about this to the rest of government.

Speaker, this is more evidence of the lack of attention to the health care crisis in our province. After seven years, this minister still doesn't have solutions for the people of our province.

I ask the minister: Why are you continuing to allow family medicine to decline in Newfoundland and Labrador on your watch?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Unfortunately, family medicine, as a discipline, across this country is nowhere near as popular as it once was. Alberta, according to CBC today, has a crisis. Quebec is actually considering legally mandating physicians to work in rural areas.

We continue to deal with the challenge. We adopted – to use another word – a holistic approach to this last fall with innovative ideas about recruitment and retention. Our packages will be ready to go in the very near future. We

have a new ADM coming. We have significant bonuses that rival any other jurisdiction in Canada. We have just negotiated a \$36 million pay raise for the physicians, including family physicians, in this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Speaker, yesterday the minister informed us that they are cherry-picking Health Accord recommendations without an implementation plan to do the cuts recommended by Moya Greene. He said they know these changes need to be done. Yes, I read the Health Accord and it emphasises a coordinated approach and a need for greater access to income and healthy foods to meet the social determinates of health.

So I ask the minister: Will you be transparent with the people in this province, or is the implementation plan another report commissioned by the people that contains commercially sensitive information?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much Speaker.

From my point of view, I can only speak with any knowledge about the Health Accord process. This was about reimagining and delivering health care differently. We, in common with governments on both sides of this House, have in the past simply thrown more money at the problem. Over those 20 or 25 years, we have not seen any benefit in terms of measurable improvements in health outcomes from Newfoundlanders or Labradorians.

This time we're going to do it differently. Dr. Parfrey and Sister Elizabeth are about investing in health, investing in the social determinants of health, so that in the next 10 years we will have a healthier population. That's what we're going to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development assured me his department inspects rental units and emergency shelters to ensure they meet standards. A CBC news article reports clients of emergency shelters speaking of broken windows and doors and the lack of food and sanitation forcing them to chose between homelessness and life-threatening danger.

I ask the minister: Are these the standard to which he referred?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

J. ABBOTT: Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Yesterday, in the question, I indicated to the Member that we have a series of standards that are in place and we are improving on those to make sure that residents and clients of anything that's sponsored by the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation meet a certain standard. We are working to improve on those and we'll continue to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: I ask the minister: What exactly are these standards? Would he able to describe them, please?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

J. ABBOTT: So in terms of the standards that we're working on, ones that are in place, there's a checklist that is available that our staff will use when they are going into any of the housing units or shelters that we manage and/or fund. We are working with End Homelessness St. John's in building a more comprehensive set of standards for both our non-profit and for-profit shelters here in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

Last week, the United Nations Secretary-General referred to countries that are increasing the production of fossil fuels as dangerous radicals and that investing in new fossil fuels infrastructure is moral and economic madness. Based on a minimum of 300 million barrels of crude oil, the Bay du Nord Project would create 146 million tons of greenhouse gases, costing \$24 billion in pollution penalties.

To avoid this environmental and fiscal legacy, will the Premier negotiate with Ottawa to secure a just transition support and a better future for our children?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Happy to speak to this project and, I guess, our industry in general, as well as climate change. One of the many positives, I guess you could say, that comes from this project is that it's the first one ever that will be net zero by 2050.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: As I've said in many interviews recently, we talk about the creation of CO2 per barrel and then the mitigating factors that will be taken. This project itself will be net zero by 2050. This province will be net zero.

So what we've done here is we've invested in perhaps a world-leading project that's going to contribute billions to our province and to the Treasury, to health care, to education and, at the same time, we're going to put ourselves in the market rather than other countries with less regulatory and ethical standards.

SPEAKER: The Member's time has expired.

A. PARSONS: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

By 2050, it'll be 7.3 degrees warmer in Nain.

On another topic in this province, would government consider removing oh so much confusion to address when we interact with each other by at least creating a single time zone for Labrador or, better, create a single time zone for the entire province? And move to eliminate daylight savings time consistent with other jurisdictions?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to respond to the question.

That's a conversation that has occurred in our department and it's something that comes up every year. I think that the Premier was part of a conversation about how we can approach that as a country, how we move forward with decision-making processes. But it's certainly something that's open for discussion.

We can see the benefits to both sides of that equation. As we move forward, we'll use informed decision-making to come to a conclusion that's suitable for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville – no preamble, please.

P. TRIMPER: On the heels of the December press release when three Labrador MHAs asked for changes to the air ambulance program, can the minister explain where the additional \$3.3 million announced in *Budget 2022* will be spent?

Thank you.

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Each year, for the last several, the air ambulance program has come in consistently over budget. The delta, the change between what we propose in this year's budget and what was spent is simply a recognition of increased utilization. We are and have undertaken a review of both air and ground ambulance aligned really with the Health Accord NL and we look forward to that blueprint recommendations in the near future.

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.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

The Local Service District of West Bay and the Town of Lourdes have an agreement in place for the extension of the water services to West Bay. They applied for funding through the Canada Community-Building Fund but when the water service was tested, it didn't meet the federal standard, resulting in the rejection of the application. The water service does meet the provincial standard and the communities still agree in principle on extending the water supply into West Bay, pending funding.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to secure funding through the Department of Transportation and

Infrastructure to ensure safe drinking water for the residents of West Bay.

Speaker, this is an opportunity for government to put their money where their mouth is in terms of regionalization. The system in Lourdes was built to be a regional water system. We have two communities who now want to come together. West Bay wants to join on the Lourdes water system. West Bay has no water. They have no system. So if we're looking at the Health Accord and what that means in the social determinants of health, when we talk about regionalization projects and an opportunity for districts to come together, this is a real opportunity for the government to step up and find a way to help West Bay and the Town of Lourdes get the water system they deserve.

The water system is already there; all we need is an extension. So we look forward to a positive response. We will continue to work with the minister. We will continue to work with Municipal Affairs, and Environment if necessary, but we need to get this done. We need to find a way to make this happen. So on behalf of the residents of West Bay and Lourdes, I am glad to be able to present this petition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the reason for this petition is as follows:

The residents of Random Island are troubled with the unsafe condition of the roads and the lack of maintenance to the roads that are maintained by Transportation and Infrastructure.

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 repair and maintain to a standard that is safe for travel by all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I mentioned Southwest Arm. Random Island is an entirely different

entity. If you are travelling along the roads in Random Island, I'm telling you right now, it is a pothole from the end of the causeway to the end of the island and it is very, very much in disrepair. We have had complaints come in to us from emergency services, ambulance drivers, we've had complaints come in from the local fire departments and certainly by the individuals that live there. I can tell you, maybe not on a daily basis, but on an every other day basis we get one, two, maybe three phone calls from people who have had lost tires and damaged rims due to the conditions of these roads.

Now, we reach out to Transportation and Infrastructure and the response that we have gotten is to tell people to drive to the conditions of the road. Well, I can tell you if the people on Random Island drove to the conditions of the road, they'd be using a helicopter because the roads aren't fit to drive on. A lot of this boils down to yearly annual maintenance. The potholes aren't addressed in the summer on a regular basis, and they should be. If they were, it would protect the Transportation department's equipment. They wouldn't be going through blades and breaking up hydraulic lines and the things that they do on a regular basis. Because of the standard of the roads, the equipment is down on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Random Island certainly deserve better. The reality of it is that the fish plant there has had to turn away trucks, and this is the second day in a row I've talked about places in my district where fish trucks are getting turned away because of the conditions of the roads. Quite frankly, it's not acceptable. That's business. If this government wants to talk about investing in business, then they have to be real about it and they need to understand that our fishery is a very important part of our business and we need roads to drive on in order to make that fishery happen.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Random Island deserve better. The roads are deplorable. These roads need to be looked at. If the minister wants to meet with me on the side of the road and have that conversation about fixing them, I'm more than willing to meet him there any day of the week. I'll drive him down there if he needs it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: The portion of 8,000 residents of the Bonavista area who meet the new criteria for a PCR test currently have to drive to Clarenville. Many of these patients are seniors with mobility issues and social service recipients who find the travel physically and financially taxing.

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 offer COVID testing in Bonavista, which would negate the requirement of three hours of travel to and from Clarenville in the advance of a procedure.

Since the onset of COVID, the residents in Bonavista would have to travel to Clarenville to get a COVID test – nothing different than what it is currently. I've made this request before to have testing done in Bonavista to alleviate a lot of the stress that would be on the residents in the area of Bonavista.

We are currently at a stage now where we have the highest incidents of COVID in the community than what we ever did in the last two years. Many don't have access to a rapid test. Many that don't have access to a rapid test can't access it because financially they're unable to do it, or because they just don't know how to test themselves.

We've got a hospital in Bonavista, of which there's a courier service going between Bonavista and Clarenville daily. The lab work in Bonavista sends their lab specimens to Clarenville. So we have the network of taxi that would be transferring or transporting the specimens to Clarenville from Bonavista. If we had somebody take the COVID test in Bonavista, they could go on that taxi with the other lab specimens and go to Clarenville for analysis.

We talk about the cost of living for the residents in rural Newfoundland. These people have had to do that for two years. The irony now is that we have people in the Bonavista area that don't

know whether they have COVID or not. They don't have access to the rapid test; therefore, they continue to circulate, thinking that they may not, when really in all eventuality it's quite possible they may.

I would think this ought to be something I'm missing, but it ought to be an easy fix for a staff member in the local area to do the COVID testing. It could be an appointment basis, but send the specimen to Clarenville to alleviate the cost and the astronomical costs during this time when the fuel costs are so high.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition is regarding the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing vacancies.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that vacant Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units in Nunatsiavut are repaired and made available to those in need in a consistent timely fashion.

Nunatsiavut Government is dealing with a housing crisis and facing huge financial barriers to building new houses; a single-serviced building lot now costs \$250,000 without the house.

Inadequate housing negatively affects our Inuit populations in a variety of ways, including child welfare, families, health and justice. These areas were highlighted in the Canadian Government's Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation final report. Further, in 2016, the federal and provincial governments committed to follow the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

One of these declarations states that Indigenous peoples have the right to adequate housing. The systemic housing insecurity in Nunatsiavut

clearly demonstrates that there is significant work that must be done before Inuit in Northern Labrador can access this right. For example, seven vacant Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units were identified in Nain, some of these houses have been vacant for up to 10 years despite the desperate need for safe and affordable housing in this community.

Nunatsiavut's housing crisis poses detrimental risk to the health and safety of community members. For instance, inadequate housing is tightly intertwined with contracting life-threatening communicable diseases such as tuberculosis. Lack of housing for low-income families also places barriers to parents, undermining their ability to provide for their children in a safe and secure environment. Lack of housing also poses problems for family members who have a criminal record.

Every housing unit is important to provide relief to the housing crisis so a process needs to be implemented to ensure vacant housing is put back into service and made available to needy families in a timely fashion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this petition is quite long, so I'll be brief in summing up my comments. I drove around Nain, the largest Inuit community in my district, with the executive director of the Nain Safe House. She drove around and identified the vacant houses that belong to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. One of the things she said is that some of these houses have been vacant for up to 10 years.

SPEAKER: Order!

The Member's time is expired.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development for a response.

J. ABBOTT: Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Just a couple of points. Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation works closely with the Nunatsiavut Government in terms of housing needs on the North Coast of Labrador.

We currently operate over 67 units, some of which the Member referred to.

I just wanted to point out that over the last two years we repaired – to the amount of \$1.2 million – housing units across five Nunatsiavut communities and we have plans to upgrade a further 10 units for repairs and to spend over \$400,000. We're also working on other housing and transition housing and supportive housing for Nunatsiavut and with the Nunatsiavut Government. Also known is that there's a significant amount of money in the federal budget to go towards Indigenous housing in Labrador.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, this government just doesn't get it. A budget is about setting priorities, it's about serving the needs of the people of the province and not a select few of those of privilege. A budget must be about compassion and knowing that people's lives will be affected.

It's once again clear that this budget was prepared by individuals unaware of the struggles of everyday people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Of course, no one knows this better than Bill and Sally. You see, Bill and Sally and their three children had the unfortunate luck of becoming the poster family for the Liberal *Budget 2022*. Immediately following the Budget Speech an onslaught of posts extolling the wondrous benefits of the budget flooded social media. One can safely assume, Speaker, that the company responsible for developing the media campaign made more doing so, than Bill and

Sally made in several decades on their low-income earnings.

The first I heard of Bill and Sally, Speaker, was from my neighbour who sent me the graphic with the comment: Have you seen this? Totally unrealistic. Based on the people who call my office seeking help, I'd have to agree. Certainly none of them has \$1,000 to spend on physical activities and wait patiently for an \$87 tax return in the spring while they're paying to heat their homes during the winter months.

In fact, I haven't quite decided which is insulting or more tone deaf, the fiction that a low-income family is getting the \$13,000 in benefits that government promised, or the assumption that they have been living with dignity on an annual income of \$16,000 in the first place.

Now, fortunately, for Bill and Sally, they are fictional and will never have to live that reality. Such is not the case, Speaker, for the people who contacted me the day following the budget and I'd like to introduce you and this Chamber to some of them and explain how this government missed opportunities to make real differences in the lives of people.

Wayne and Alice are on income support due to health reasons and receive \$11,640 a year. While their rent is subsidized, Speaker, they still have to pay \$315 for their portion of the rent, another \$50 a month for heat and light. That leaves them with a little under \$7,300 annually to cover their phone bill, groceries and other expenses. With no doctors in the area taking new patients and no Metrobus, they have to spend well over \$100 on a taxi trip to see their doctor, which they can't afford.

Wayne wrote: We look at the price of food in the grocery store and have to walk away. It's not possible to eat healthy anymore.

Another person, Speaker, Jane, asked me: Does the government realize how much people are struggling? She's a single person earning \$40,000 annually who is now researching food banks for the first time in her life. She does not live above her means, and owns her own car and house. She writes: I woke up this morning feeling very lost, broken, afraid and hopeless and it scares me. In my 30 years working in the

workforce, this is the first time I've ever suffered this much financially. I'm afraid of the outcome in regards to keeping my life going. I've worked so hard as a single woman to purchase my own home, car and to finally stand on my own two feet as an independent woman.

Speaker, Anne is a working senior in her 70s. She raised her two children on her own, after her husband died. She worked two jobs, rather than go on income support. Last year, she applied for CERB benefits after consulting with her MP, Speaker, to make sure that she was eligible and would not be penalized for doing so. Despite those assurances, she lost her federal GIS, her provincial Seniors' Benefit and her provincial drug card.

Now after much pressure, Speaker, from Jack Harris and the federal NDP, the federal Liberals reinstated GIS payments for seniors. No such gesture by the provincial Liberals. Anne had \$1,600 clawed back from her Seniors' Benefit leaving her with four quarterly payments of \$155. There are many other seniors in Anne's situation. Anne told me she will have to fill her oil tank soon, and fill-up will cost her \$1,500 – money she doesn't have.

Speaker, a budget is about setting priorities and making choices about what action to take and not take. This provincial government could have chosen not to claw back Seniors' Benefits, or to reinstate it like its federal cousin. It chose not to.

Where is the Liberal promise of a poverty reduction strategy? It was only last year in this House, in this Chamber, that we echoed the request of provincial anti-poverty groups for government not to claw back CERB payments from income support recipients. The request fell on deaf ears and intensified the suffering of many people. Reduction of poverty, Mr. Speaker, it seems, is not a priority for this government.

Budget 2022 is promoted as status quo. There are no new tax increases, and no major cuts. So let's not kid ourselves; any budget that does not take into account, Mr. Speaker, the inflation we have seen this past year, is a cut. As a result, organizations depending on government funding are required to cut or downgrade their services,

or to pass on the cost to people who depend on those services.

In our prebudget submission to the Minister of Finance, we proposed increasing core funding to community centres across the province. Community centres provide an invaluable service in addressing social issues that would otherwise become problematic and more costly to government. However, they are woefully underfunded.

The MacMorran Community Centre is a case in point. If you saw the CBC *Here & Now* news article, you would know they operate a small food bank and serve hot meals several times a week to seniors and to people in the community. Their programs are stretched as a result of inflation and they are busier than ever, and the demand is rising.

Prepandemic, an average of 35 to 37 people visited their food bank monthly. The number is now 87. According to the reporter, the price of food in this province has risen by 9 per cent over the past 12 months, higher than any province and higher than the Canadian average, Mr. Speaker. It further increases the demands on the MacMorran Community Centre that is already stretched to the limit, and the same is true for other community centres throughout the province. A status quo budget hurts our most vulnerable citizens and targets the organizations that are designed to help them.

We also ask for investment in public transit, especially with regional transit systems, as a way for the province to fight climate change. We ask for increased funding to municipalities so that public transport, especially Metrobus and GoBus in St. John's metro area, can provide more routes with increased frequency of service so people like Wayne and Alice have affordable transportation options.

For that reason we ask that the province extend the road tax rebate offered to the city fleet so that it applies to Metrobus and GoBus. That did not happen. Instead, the budget announced an extension of bus passes to include seniors in receipt of the Guaranteed Income Supplement, youth in care and those receiving Youth Services programming.

Now, on the surface, Speaker, this seems positive, except they failed to inform the other partner in this – the City of St. John’s – and seem intent on adding to the program while cutting costs. In effect, the citizens of the capital city will be expected to pick up the tab.

Housing or, rather, the lack of affordable housing units is reaching crisis proportions in St. John’s, in my district especially, and in other areas of this province. The number of calls coming into our office, Speaker, from people looking for a stable, affordable roof over their heads has increased. Prior to Christmas our office, for the first time, was taking calls from people who were living in tents and looking for a place to get in out of the weather.

The number of evictions has increased as landlords look to upgrade and charge more for their properties. Emergency shelters are at capacity. The provincial government can either continue to house people in hotel rooms and other emergency shelters, or can invest in new, low-income housing stock, which benefit not only those on income support but people like Bill and Sally and their three children.

A status quo budget, however, means no significant construction, Speaker, of housing units. *Budget 2022* makes it difficult to maintain and renovate current stock and only exacerbates the housing shortage and the reliance on emergency shelters. It amounts to another cut.

The prices of basic goods like food, gas, electricity and building supplies all continue to increase. Despite our inclination to lay blame solely at the feet of taxes and fuel prices, Canada’s Food Price Report released in December 2021 predicted increased food prices in the order of 5 to 7 per cent – the highest predicted increase in 12 years, Speaker.

A variety of factors are responsible: the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions, shortage of labour, high fuel prices and, yes, climate change. As noted above, Newfoundland and Labrador is leading the way when it comes to retail rising food prices. Food insecurity and let’s call it really what it is – hunger is on the rise.

One in seven Newfoundland and Labrador families goes hungry and do not have access to enough food, Speaker. According to Statistics Canada, nearly 15 per cent of households across the province cannot afford reliable access to food. Instead, the study found that the governments’ policies are the ones that directly affect food security levels to the greatest extent.

Now, Speaker, instead of using revenue raised from the sugar-sweetened beverage tax to help fund the Physical Activity Tax Credit, maybe, just maybe, it could have been better spent to find ways to make nutritious food more available. Or, since most of our food is shipped in, maybe we should be exploring ways to offset the shipping and supply costs. If government had a better understanding of the needs of our most vulnerable, they would not have introduced a tax in the first place. It is another example of how they just don’t get it.

While food prices and other necessities have skyrocketed, Speaker, wages have stagnated. A lack of income is the underlying cause of poverty. The time is now to legislate a living wage and pay equity to address the widening gender pay gap. How about paid sick days? To help small businesses absorb the cost of an increased wages for employees, reduce or eliminate the small business tax they have to pay.

The time has also come to explore the concept of a basic, livable income. PEI is already planning to move ahead with a pilot project. It is time to strike the Committee to explore a basic income pilot project here in this province, which was called for in our resolution which was unanimously adopted by this House, Speaker.

As I stated in the beginning, a budget is about priorities, about people and about hope; it is about doing things differently, about putting people first. Until government prioritizes all people in this province and recognizes that we all have value, not just the people who had 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 livelihood prioritized.

People make this province and they will be the solution to the future. We have a real opportunity to build a just and equitable society

in the pandemic world if we have the political will. The war in Ukraine has highlighted the importance of reliable, affordable and sustainable energy systems. More than ever that is what the world needs. What Canada needs is an energy system that can accommodate sudden changes in climate and world politics, all while continuing to play a key role in the economic recovery from the pandemic.

Building up our renewable energy resources and transitioning our economy into clean energy is the best way for the people of our province to reach these goals. Only by taking on the challenge of a clean energy transformation can Newfoundland and Labrador realize a future that is safe and prosperous for all and only by acting decisively today can Newfoundland and Labrador take advantage of the opportunities to create thousands of good jobs and advance our economic future.

More than four out of five people in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador want to see transition to renewable energy and energy efficiency. In addition, more than four out of five want our governments to provide training and income support for workers to make the transition. Workers must not bear the brunt of this transition alone and any transition needs to be just and equitable and include supports.

The evidence of a looming climate catastrophe are present everywhere and already affecting our environment, economy and our wallets. A March article in *The Telegram* highlighted the fact that St. John's is getting windier. From 1992 to 2011, Speaker, the average number of days with wind gusts higher than 60 kilometres per hour was 80.65 days. For 2012 to 2021, it was 144.5 days, that's a 79 per cent increase.

Now, if that doesn't cause you concern, maybe this will. Amanda Dean, the Atlantic region vice-president for the Insurance Bureau of Canada noted an increase in property damage claims due to extreme weather. From 1983 to 2008, Speaker, Canadian insurers paid out an average of \$422 million annually. From 2012 to 2021, the average annual payout jumped to \$2.1 billion. In 2021 alone, the losses were \$2.4 billion, a four-fold increase, Speaker. Whether you've made a claim or not, don't be surprised if you see your premiums increase.

The recent mass die-off of turrs, the largest in the history of the province, is expected to be climate related, similar to the mass die-off of murrelets in Alaska in 2015-2016. There it was determined that a warming ocean resulted in a drop in capelin numbers, the bird's main food source, causing them to starve. There's strong evidence to suggest that the collapse of the commercial cod fishery was climate related. At the same time cod stocks collapsed, salmon and capelin populations collapsed as well. Something was happening at sea.

In the past year, we've witnessed heat domes, atmospheric rivers that have washed out the Trans-Canada Highway and disrupt the supply routes, raging fires that ravished forests in British Columbia, severe drought in our Western provinces and the Midwest United States, which all but decimated grain crops. Tackling climate change can no longer be an afterthought or an add-on to an oil project announcement.

Both the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nations are clear on the gravity of the challenge ahead of us. In a recent speech on March 21, the Secretary-General of the UN noted: Addiction to fossil fuels is mutually assured destruction and the world is sleepwalking into climate catastrophe. Instead of hitting the brakes on the decarbonization of the global economy, now is the time to race towards a renewable energy future.

If we were to take his warning seriously, it's past time for government to act. Clearly, there are enormous challenges to make a clean energy transition happen, nevertheless there are also huge opportunities for our province to create thousands of good new jobs and advance our economic future.

We can no longer believe the oil industry doublespeak, rather we must do what science dictates and start decarbonizing our economy at the speed and scale required; nor can we simply rename and rebrand our oil and gas industry organizations and expect a different outcome. Make no mistake, the oil industry as an economic driver will end in our lifetime, and the time is to act now.

Governments have a primary role in transitioning their economies to sustainable and

renewable energy and it cannot be a haphazard patchwork approach. Governments need to chart a clear course towards rapid, just and equitable transitions to a clean energy economy. Weaning the economy off oil and gas must be a comprehensive effort to ensure a planned transition. It cannot be done by Newfoundland and Labrador alone but must be in partnership with the federal government.

We will need to end all government subsidies, tax breaks and financial support for the oil and gas industry. It's encouraging that the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology and the federal Natural Resources minister have committed to expedite the elimination of subsidies for oil companies. Considering the fact that all major oil companies posted record profits for 2021, this shouldn't be a problem.

To deliver the major job creation for a new low-carbon sector this government, in partnership with Ottawa, must invest in the renewable energy and infrastructure and develop employment opportunities that ensure high-quality jobs. We will need just transition legislation at both the provincial and federal levels, guided by feedback from provinces, workers, unions and communities that lay out targets for training, retraining, diversification, retirement and pension support, with a commitment to uphold, Speaker, union jobs and training through project labour agreements and targeted hire mandates.

We will need to establish national and provincial climate secretariats to oversee the transition and establish a clean jobs training centre. We will need annual reports on emissions reductions and must pass a provincial climate act that sets legally binding greenhouse gas emission reductions.

Mr. Speaker, a clear climate and jobs plan will move our province forward and ensure that no one is left behind. Today, we must do everything we can for the common good and to make renewable energy and an equitable and resilient future a reality. Using these principles together we can design and manage a transition in a way that both grows Newfoundland and Labrador and offers a better future for all of its people.

Yes, Speaker, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are resilient and have had to adapt to enormous changes throughout our history. That resilience is born of tenacity, the courage to face challenges ahead of us and our commitment to look after those in need.

A provincial budget must ensure, Speaker, that no one is left behind. Bill, Sally, Wayne and Alice, Jane and Anne and many others must believe that government is looking after them and not just the bottom line. Compared to this standard, *Budget 2022* fails and many people out there need to see evidence that the province has their backs.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to speak on behalf of the residents, constituents in the District of Bonavista. Before I get started on the budget, I'd like to reflect back and hearken back to when we were discussing helmets in quads. At that point in time, it was Humber-Bay of Islands who mentioned about turrs. And I know the sensitivity with turrs now, to mention, but the Member had spoken about hunting freshwater turrs from quads.

When I got back home in the District of Bonavista, was I ever inundated with emails from residents in the District of Bonavista saying there are no such thing as freshwater turrs and he's hunting them from – so we had a little bit of humour on that. But the final thing I'd say is this quote, it was a gentleman from Cannings Cove, a gentleman by the name of Wade Chapman. He said: When you get a chance, you tell Mr. Joyce that those people that are hunting freshwater turrs over in his riding would love to come to our district and hunt the saltwater rabbits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I thought I'd share that even though I have extreme sensitivity for the turr situation on the Northeast Coast.

I notice we have chairs that are different here in the House of Assembly, which are, I think, good for one's health. But one thing I do miss on the other ones – I know that they were made out of sealskin. I thought that the fact that they were made of sealskin was a topic that, hopefully if I get another chance to speak, maybe I can speak to the seal population within the fishery.

In listening to the Members within and the people that have communicated with me in the District of Bonavista, I haven't heard one person say that they were in favour of the budget, but everyone would be in agreement that times are tough. We know about our debt, we know about our deficit, we know about inflation that we have. But when they elect government, they elect government to make sure that they look after the people that they serve, to do the best-case situation of looking after and caring for the residents that would be served.

On Friday night at 8, I had an email from a lady in Southern Bay, whose initials are L. H. The lady wrote and brought to my attention the graphic that my colleague from the St. John's Centre had mentioned and my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port had spoke on yesterday – Bill and Sally. And this mom took great exception on the graphic as being a government that was out of touch as to what the situation that she and others would find themselves in in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It might seem a trivial thing, but if you have people that are making decisions based on you, that send out a graphic and a narrative that is so far off track then I can understand why, in Newfoundland and Labrador, our residents would say it's an issue.

Here is some of what L. H. had stated. She stated adequately that any member of a family of five only earning \$16,000 a year, chances are they would have daycare subsidized. So they wouldn't be into that frame to start with. If they're only working 25 hours a week, they certainly wouldn't need daycare.

And, of course, transit and the subsidization of transit is a good thing for those who can avail of it. But I would say in Port Rexton, in Catalina, in New Bonaventure and in Bonavista, we cannot access public transit and to get a discount. That doesn't mean it doesn't have a place. It does, but just that the residents in my district can't avail of that.

And then she mentions about the Physical Activity Tax benefit. To think that somebody, a couple on \$16,000 can pay \$1,000 – and I know this was stated and I don't need to dwell on that, but that is really way out there in la-la land that you would pay \$1,000 to have your kids involved in a program.

I would like to read what she ends with. She challenged all those decision-makers who created the graphic to live on \$16,000 a year – try it. And I would say most of us here that are listening today, we can only hear stories because most have not experienced what the graphic of Bill and Sally is passing on to Newfoundland and Labrador.

And she concludes in her email, at 8 on a Friday night: This graphic is completely disrespectful to the people of the province. It shows total ignorance about the struggles of low-income individuals and what things actually cost. More and more people are becoming categorized as the working poor; it's time for decision-makers to educate themselves. This isn't good enough.

And the story came in *The Telegram* then on Saturday, which echoed the same thing about a real-life experience of a mother with two children, about the experience and taking exception to the article as well.

Mr. Speaker, when I picked up the budget and I opened the first page on the Budget Speech, and when the minister was reading it out, she had started with, as was stated before, "... we have weathered the storm. We may have been lashed by it but the day has arisen with brighter skies and calmer seas. The fog is lifting."

Well, my mom always thought I was a very naïve young boy when I was growing up – very gullible, very naïve. But I immediately thought, I can't wait to read about the fishery. Because this looks like something coming in to Catalina

harbour, or coming around the point in Bonavista – I said, there's something more in the fishery here than what it was last year.

And I'm not talking about the fishery today, but I just want to say a \$1-billion industry, a renewable industry in Newfoundland and Labrador that we give no attention to, nobody gives any credence to and how important it is for rural Newfoundland and Labrador, but we take no actions to grow our stocks as what we've got in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Because there was nothing in here in this budget any more than what it was in past budgets.

I would say to you, we've got \$1 billion in the fishery this year thanks solely to the shell industry, to the lobster and the crab. What about the rest of the species we have in the water? We know where the seals are, but we're not harvesting the seals. Turbot from last year, from 2020 to 2021, down 11.3 per cent; cod, down 4.7 per cent; redfish, 3.6 per cent; capelin, 6.9 per cent; herring, 18.9 per cent; mackerel, 85 per cent.

If we want to build an industry and make sure that we want what the minister has stated before, that we want to create the revenues to be able to offer social programs and effect the cost of living, we ought to be doing more with the fishery than we currently are, no doubt about that. We ought to be doing more.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: I remember we had the Minister of TI on VOCM on Friday. The Minister of TI had stated that the Opposition, all they want to do is spend, spend, spend, but I would take exception to that. Even though I respect difference of opinion, but I would say to you, we know what our limitations are. The only thing being is that where we divert our money and where we make it a priority. I think my hon. colleague next door, from Stephenville - Port au Port, spoke so eloquently yesterday stating that we ought to have given more focus on those that would be suffering as a result of the high cost of living that we have in our population.

I would say to you, we all know about inflation and we know the inflationary pressures. The first thing you would say is that, well, inflation is everywhere. It is and it's multifaceted and it's complex. But if I look in the back of the Budget Speech, and I would look at in the year '22-'23, this budget year, the gasoline tax that the province will take in will be \$141,648,000. That is a significant amount to take in in the gasoline tax.

Added to that, in '22-'23, is the carbon tax. The carbon tax will be another \$117,013,000. You combine the two together, then you're a little over \$260 million in one year that comes out either in gasoline tax or it comes out in carbon tax. And I know we don't have full control of the carbon tax. All I'm saying is that government is pulling that out of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in our province and we wonder about the cost of living.

All I would say is \$260 million in those two taxes alone affects a phenomenal amount of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. So I would say when we look at some other statistics – and the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development would know, and I am quite familiar as far as looking at the school system in my past experiences – the study says that we have got 21 per cent of our children who live in poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador. I know we're making efforts to address that; I realize that, but that statistic is brutally alarming.

The study also says the rate goes to 25 per cent when you look at children under six years of age. Imagine one-quarter of our population would be in the poverty range in Newfoundland and Labrador. I know that we need to adjust it and I know that we take measures but the only thing, the statistics are the statistics. So when my colleague from St. John's Centre states that the budget did not meet many of the needs in Newfoundland and Labrador, it didn't. That I would say. I know that it is complex, but it is what it is.

I sat in on the Estimates this morning and I know that my hon. friend, the Government House Leader, it was a great session in Estimates in Tourism. But when he had discussed about the NASCAR and if it was accurate as far as you invest \$600,000 and you

get a return of \$5.6 million, then I immediately thought that seemed to be a fair investment.

But I did ask for a cost-benefit analysis. I said: Did you do a cost-benefit analysis on the investment? We ought to do a better communication with the people in Newfoundland and Labrador to say, we're just not spending \$600,000. With a cost-benefit analysis done, we can better educate the people to say this is good bang for our buck: it is an investment. But I don't know yet; I am just going on basically what the hon. Member had stated. So a part to qualify that would have been the cost-benefit analysis.

In my short time that is left, I look at it and say I just went over and talked about the residents in the District of Bonavista and they're no different than the residents in the districts of every Member that would be in the House.

I almost resent the fact where you say in a budget document, no provincial taxes this year. Well, I would say we know the sugar tax is coming. Even though it's coming this year, but that's not stated anywhere in the budget, in the revenue side, because that was passed last year.

So I would look at when someone looked in the District of Bonavista and stated no provincial new taxes, they would say, well, where's the sugar tax? And that was the question today: Have we cancelled the sugar tax? The second thing, of which if I get a chance to speak in the future, would be on regionalization.

Well, I've got a lot of LSDs and unincorporated areas in my district. And I spoke before on us transforming George's Brook-Milton from an LSD to a municipality and what the benefits were. So back in 2018, my whole working life I was in an LSD. So we've got the Lethbridge, say, an area, LSD, which is twice the size of George's Brook-Milton, 1,500 to 1,600 people. The sugar tax is coming, but on regionalization, what I read on the last budget – last year's budget – was that those people in the LSDs and the unincorporated areas ought to pay their fair share of tax.

Now, whether we've changed that direction, whether we're going to qualify it a little more, massage it, but that was in last year's budget

with the sugar tax. So I would say in the District of Bonavista, \$260 million in the province coming out in carbon and gas tax. We have a lot of other taxes which I could read out, but I think it would be disconcerting to a lot of people that would be listening. They can also expect regionalization. There may be a cost with regionalization for a service that they're going to be given or afforded, but that's going to be another amount that comes out of the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and especially those in the District of Bonavista.

So I know that when it comes down to the sugar tax, I wouldn't mind speaking on that a little more because I just want to say what the Minister of Education had referenced a little earlier and would like to discuss that a little further. But I want to mention one thing; we're going to be the healthiest province in Canada in 2030.

That is a noble pursuit and I'm all on board with it. The only thing I would say to you, if this government has proposed that the physical tax rebate, that you pay \$1,000 for your kids to be in the program and that's going to translate with the sugar tax to make us the healthiest province in Canada, not going to happen. That alone won't move the needle. There has to be something of a little more substance than those two items of which to make us the healthiest in.

I stated before, and maybe if I get a chance to speak again, I'll probably speak to the increase in the physical activity of our children.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER (Trimper): Order, please!

One at a time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: I'll remind everyone we have the Member for Bonavista speaking.

Thank you.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

That would be a nice debate and probably another time we can discuss that. These are going to establish programs.

I'd like to think Roger Ball is probably watching this program now, and Roger Ball had stated a couple of times, as a senior, that they could not get access to school facilities in our province. Schools exist in communities in Newfoundland and Labrador and if not in your community, they're within a regional conglomerate of communities that are served by a school. His suggestion is that schools should be accessible for seniors and for others and maximize these facilities that would be strewn all over Newfoundland and Labrador.

The only thing I would say, there are a lot of people that are on board with that. For the sake of Mr. and Mrs. Ball, I would say we've discussed that – there are heads nodding here. The House Leader acknowledged that this morning that's one that we ought to be doing. And, remember, everything comes with some challenges and complexities, but this shouldn't be something that's so daunting that it should be a deterrent.

Mr. Speaker, I notice that I have seven seconds left, but I do look forward to my next speaking time and thank you very much for your patience and diligence.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you very much to the Member.

The hon. the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker, I appreciate that.

It is indeed a pleasure to stand here today. It's a hard act to follow my colleague from Bonavista, no doubt about it. But it's a pleasure to stand and to speak to the debate on *Budget 2022*.

Mr. Speaker, I do know that, as I've heard from the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, this budget was put through many different lens. It was put through a social lens and a gender-neutral lens. But I want to

open up my time here this morning, Mr. Speaker, with the lens of the blue-collar worker. Many constituents in my district fall under that lens.

I have to say with the increased cost of living, when we're looking at the price of our heating fuel, when we're looking at the price of the fuel putting in our gas tanks to move our vehicles, when we're looking that the food prices that are drastically increasing – I believe my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port said when they look at the price on the shelf, they get sticker shock. That's the reality that each and every person are dealing with in today's society.

When you're looking at the blue-collared workers in my district, and I've spoken with many of them, before and since the budget last week. Many families who are hard-working individuals, both parents working, sometimes working a second job. One individual I spoke with is working three jobs, seven days a week, to try to make ends meet for him and his family.

Speaker, when you look at the decisions that these families are having to make on a daily basis, it really causes us to stop and to think. When you're looking at someone having to work three jobs, just to get through the week, it's hardly believable but it is believable, Speaker, because I've spoken to the individuals. I've heard their stories. I've listened to them intently as to what they have to do.

Speaker, I want to share with you one instance from a family in Torbay where both parents are working. They have two children; one is a 15-year-old teenager. Now, we all have our preconceived notions of teenagers and what they do on a daily basis, but I can tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker, this particular young gentleman saw the need that his family has to go through life with today's skyrocketing prices. That young man took on a part-time job, not to pay for his licence that he wants to get when he turns 16 or to pay for a vehicle, he got a part-time job to put money into the household, at the age of 15.

Now, Speaker, I know that there are 40 of us here in this hon. House, and I remember when I was 15, it was quite some years ago, not as many as others but quite some years ago. I can

tell you putting money into the household budget was not a priority of mine at the age of 15. But that's what we are hearing today. That is the reality that families are forced to look at and to make. So when you look at it through the lens of a blue-collar worker, I want you to remember that.

I know that the Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board and every Member on the government side put what they could into this budget. I realize that each Member on the government side cares for their constituents and their districts. I have no doubt. I'm not here to stand today to speak otherwise, but I can tell you that I am sure that you are hearing it as well on the government side, as what I'm hearing in my beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

It's not easy, and it's not easy to listen to those people who are affected when they have to make those choices. So, Speaker, we have to remember the blue-collar lens when decisions are being made in this hon. House for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you.

Speaker, the hon. Minister of Education spoke several times about child care and the \$10-a-day child care. No doubt that is a good thing. That is a good move. It certainly makes a difference to the overall ability of many families in my district and throughout the province. But, Speaker, what I'm finding in my district and I'm hearing it on a regular basis – I heard it again this morning – a young mother from Torbay reached out to me, who works full-time and cannot get a space for her 18-month-old daughter to go to child care. She found an unregulated home in Kilbride, which is the closest that she could get to the Town of Torbay for child care.

So when you look at what she's paying in \$45 a day and the increase in the amount of gas and the travel time that she has to take five days a week in order for her 18-month-old daughter to be in child care, it's not worth her time to go to work and that is the reality.

So the \$10-a-day daycare, I applaud the minister, it is a great move. But, Minister, we need more spaces available and not just in my district, through all districts. This is a reality. It's having an impact on families who are trying to work, who are trying to survive, day to day in their household budget and with their bills.

So I ask the minister to keep that in mind when moving forward. Again, I applaud \$10-a-day daycare. No doubt about it, but we need to have the spaces available in order to do so to make that viable for many families.

Speaker, I've spoken to hundreds of seniors. Seniors make up the great population of each one of our districts. But when we have to listen to the seniors and what they're going through. One couple from Pouch Cove reached out to me. They filled up their oil tank: \$1,660. There was no money left over – there was no money left over to pay for groceries.

That family, that couple who I've known all my life, I hold in high regard, have a great amount of respect for them, they are now forced, for the first time in their lives, to go to the Northeast Avalon Food Bank.

When you have a husband and wife who've worked 45 years and they're forced, at this point in their lives, to go to a food bank, that again is reality. These people are 70 and 72 and not someone who –

AN HON. MEMBER: Tear your heart out.

J. WALL: It does. Someone just made a comment: it tears the heart out. It does tear your heart out, because you know they've worked all their lives. They've worked hard. They provided for a family. They have a lovely home around them. But this is the point where they have to go to a food bank. They're looking at me saying: Joedy, how do I do it? That's the reality.

When you have a gentleman at 72 years of age, who has never asked for anything, that's what we have to look at. That's another lens, Mr. Speaker, that we have to look at.

I've said it before in this House, seniors in my district are splitting their prescribed medications. They are rationing their insulin. These are all

things that they need on a daily basis to keep them well. If not, there's going to be an added expense to our government, to this province, because they're going to be in the hospital.

I have seniors who can no longer afford to live in their homes. They are now considering selling their homes and moving into an apartment, because they can't afford to pay their bills with the rising costs of everything that's going on in today's society.

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of everyone here, the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis does not have public transit, so unless you're in St. John's, Mount Pearl or Paradise, that doesn't work in all the other districts.

I applaud the initiative, not taking that away from the minister, but when I have seniors who can't afford to go to Foodland to buy their groceries and pay for the gas, that's a reality.

I spoke of the food bank a moment ago, and I'd like to give a shout-out to the volunteers at the Northeast Avalon Foodbank in Torbay. They serve my district, a portion of Conception Bay East - Bell Island, and they have a job to do, no doubt, a daunting job. On a regular basis, there are 85 families who take part and avail of that food bank. During Christmas and Easter, special times in the year, it goes up to 130 families, and it's crawling up ever so steadily on a regular basis. As I just explained, families can no longer pay bills and buy groceries.

So again, I give a shout-out to those individuals, those volunteers at the Northeast Avalon Foodbank who do such a crucial job and are now helping take care of people who didn't need the assistance before. That is the reality.

Speaker, my parents are in that age frame, and unlike my colleague from Burin - Grand Bank who gave his mother's age last week, I'm not man enough to say that here in this House, I can tell you, because I want to stay in the will. But I will say I know they're watching at home and I'll get a ribbing when I get home this evening, I can tell you that. But they're in that same boat. They've worked hard all their life, thank God they're doing well, and please God, they won't have to face that. But that is the reality of my parents as well, they're in that demographic and

I thank God that they have what they have and, please God, they'll hold their health.

Speaker, when I look at this budget, *CHANGE is in the air*, I look at my district, I look at the municipalities in my district and I look at the fire departments. I have two outstanding fire departments in my district, Torbay Volunteer and Pouch Cove Volunteer. And when we sat through Estimates with the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, we looked at the line item for that particular budget and we did have questions for the hon. minister. I have to say it was very good Estimates. He brought two people with him, I think - he had about 15. But I can tell you, and I said it then and I'll say it now, you're only as good as those around you and he, no doubt, had a good team around him. He answered the questions very well.

But I look at what's in that budget for fire departments across the province. And I've had the honour of travelling across this province, meeting with municipalities, meeting with fire chiefs and fire departments from Pouch Cove to the Great Northern Peninsula. And I'll give a shout-out to my municipal colleague, Mayor Dale Colbourne in St. Lunaire-Griquet.

And I realize what municipalities have to do in order to keep fire and emergency services alive and well in their town and to support the volunteers that each department has. I fully realize, with my boots being on the ground 7½ years as a former mayor, what it takes and what has to be supported in order to have a quality department and to keep your members safe.

So to see the decrease in the budget for fire and emergency equipment, it went from \$2.7 million up to \$3 million, down to \$1.88 million. We look at that and that concerns me when we look at the level of infrastructure throughout the province. We also need to remember that infrastructure keeps our volunteers safe. No doubt about it, we need to keep that first and foremost in our minds when it come to that.

My hon. colleague for Bonavista mentioned regionalization. A very hot topic, no doubt, in today's world and our province. I have had many discussions with mayors of municipalities, chairs of Local Service Districts, unincorporated areas. I have had many conversations with the

hon. minister. Regionalization is the plan that is being rolled out with respect to her department and the level of engagement that is going to be required. Well, one thing I didn't see in the budget was a line item for the necessary communications that is needed, going forward, to engage all these municipalities, Local Service Districts and unincorporated areas.

Tonight, Speaker, I have the privilege of sitting in Estimates for Municipal and Provincial Affairs. I do have some good questions for the hon. minister and we're looking for those answers. We're hearing from municipalities across the province. We're hearing from MNL and the level of engagement that is required in order for regionalization – not just to be rolled out, because there is a process, no doubt about it. But in order for the minister to do the work that is required and to have all stakeholders at the table to have their voices heard and to ensure that they have proper representation. So I was disappointed, to be honest, that wasn't there in the budget.

It goes without saying with respect to the Bay du Nord Project: Each and every one of us here on the Official Opposition's side are very thankful that the Bay du Nord Project is a go. I'll say that unequivocally, with respect to the workers that are in my district who have reached out to me, who were very concerned, no doubt, were very concerned that they didn't think that this was going to happen but are pleased with that project going forward and what it is going to mean for our province.

Speaker, I know my time is getting short, but I do have a couple of things that I do want to discuss. I did mention the Torbay fire department earlier. They just celebrated their 48th anniversary in the Town of Torbay, serving the residents of Torbay and Flat Rock. I wanted to give a shout-out to them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: To outgoing Chief McGrath with his 48 years in the department – 48 years in the department. That is to be commended for his service to fire service in the Town of Torbay and Flat Rock. To incoming Chief Rodney Gaudet and Deputy Chief Phonse McGrath, you have big shoes to fill, no doubt, but I'm here to work

with you and to ensure that your department has everything that is required in order to keep your members safe, and of course, to keep your residents safe in the Town of Torbay and the Town of Flat Rock.

Speaker, I will say that we all know where we were to one year ago today; I hope we remember. One year ago today we were sworn in. So that's one year for me. We have several new Members in this House. Some are here longer than others, but it's one year. No doubt, Speaker, it's been a very good year. It's been challenging. It's been overwhelming at times, but it's certainly a privilege for me to stand and represent the good people of Cape St. Francis and to speak on their behalf, and I thank them for putting that trust in me.

Over the last year, I've worked with hundreds of my constituents on various issues – family issues, individual issues, municipal concerns – and I thank them for allowing me to be part of the resolution that looks into their issues and solves them. It is indeed a privilege.

As I said before, the 40 of us here in this hon. House, we all have our constituents first and foremost. We make the best decisions and we offer the most help that we possibly can for our constituents. When I relate that back to the budget, I see many good things in the budget and other things that were left out. It is all, no doubt, a process. It's all, no doubt, challenging. It's challenging for government; it's challenging for us in the Opposition. We all have a job to do.

As I said to many ministers and many colleagues on the opposite side, it will be done with respect and dignity. You don't change just because you come into this hon. House. I want to just remind everyone of that. It is indeed a pleasure, as I said, to speak to this budget. I do look forward to the opportunity of speaking again as we go forward. I thank everyone for your time and your attention.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Always a privilege to stand in this hon. House and say a few words, this time about the budget. This will be my first opportunity, and hopefully we'll see some amendments and we'll get more opportunities. I certainly hope so.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing I just want to throw out there, and this is something when we talk about this year's budget, I'm going to steal something from – I asked this person. He said it on social media. I said: I got to use this one in the House; do you mind? He said: Absolutely, go right ahead.

It was about the title of the budget. And this individual said: Last year's budget was entitled *CHANGE starts here*. This year's budget is entitled *CHANGE is in the air*. He said: Well, I would like the government to know that this year's budget shouldn't be called *CHANGE is in the air*; this year's budget should be called hey, mister, can you spare some change? Because that is how a lot of people feel about this budget; that's how they feel about their financial circumstances.

This is not something that I came up with; this is something that I've heard, I've heard other Members here on this side of the House talk about the phone calls, the emails, and as my colleague from CBS says, and I agree with him wholeheartedly, that conversation at Tim Hortons or up at the grocery store. That's where you hear from real people. That's where you hear from the average Joe, the average Jane, the average person on the street, and that's where you get the sense of how people truly feel about what is going on.

For those who don't do it, and as the Member has said from CBS, I recommend you do it. You get out there at the grocery store and start talking to people and you'll hear. People will be honest; they'll tell you, good or bad. And I've been on the bad side of it; there has been times I can remember years ago where people told me what they thought of me and it wasn't necessarily kind every time. But they'll tell you. Absolutely, 100 per cent.

So I want to refer to a term that I heard during Snowmageddon, Mr. Speaker. During

Snowmageddon, we remember here on this end of the Island what had happened. We had to bring in the Army and everything else to help dig people out. During that time when everything was shut down, one of the things that we had that was a must and a priority, was to open up arteries to the grocery stores, open up arteries to the gas stations, the retail stores and everything. At that time, the government and others were referring to the people that were working at these stores as heroes. That's what they were saying; these are the heroes.

And, of course, when we got into COVID-19 and the pandemic struck, again that was the priority: Keep the gas stations open, keep the convenience stores open and keep the grocery stores open. Again, we kept on hearing the term, these are the heroes. When the rest of us are staying home isolating and so on, these people are out on the front line working. That's an important point to make: out on the front line working and providing what was deemed, obviously, and we learned, an essential service. We might not have appreciated the fact at the time or prior to that how essential a service it is until it's taken away. But I think we quickly realized the importance of those people who get up every day and go to work in retail and so on and the importance that they have to the economy, that they have to all of us.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, a lot of those people who were referred to as heroes many times, a lot of those people, not only are they going to work, but they're getting up and they're going to work and a lot of them are not receiving fair remuneration. I'm not dumping on all employers, but I can tell you, there are an awful lot of employers out there, particularly a lot of the bigger ones, the national and the international ones, that as far as I'm concerned are abusing employees. They're paying them lousy wages, in many cases, little to no benefits, and then they're not even giving them full-time hours in many cases.

They're giving them split shifts or you come in in the morning, you have to work this morning, you come in and they're halfway through their shift, it's not too busy there now, you can go home – without pay, of course. And if they come in in the evening or if they come in the morning and it gets busy and they had a shift that was

supposed to end at a certain time, oh, you have to stay later. No consideration for the fact that they might have a life, they might have children and they might have families and so on; you're on our time now.

So that kind of thing, that abuse, I call it, happens all the time, and I have heard from people who have been in that situation, many of them. These are the people who we refer to as heroes. Well, as other Members on this side of the House have said, these so-called – quote, unquote – heroes did not benefit. Many of these people did not benefit one iota from the things that are in this budget – not one iota.

Now, I'm not saying nobody benefited. There are some people benefiting from the child care – some. There are a lot of people that aren't even getting the \$25, or the \$10 or \$15 daycare, because there are no spaces. They can't get a space. So they either have no daycare at all, or some are managing to get daycare but they're not subsidized daycare.

Even though government has this program, there are a lot of places you still have to pay the \$45. The reason for that is some of the daycare centres are saying that when you came in with the \$25 daycare originally – and now it's going down – but when you did, instead of saying okay, if they were charging \$45 and now it's going down to \$25, the government could say, well, we're going to give you the extra \$20 to make up the shortfall, but they didn't. The government gave them an extra \$13 or whatever it is, so now they're expected, as an operator, to go from \$45 down to \$38 in order to accommodate the government program. They're taking a loss.

Some of these daycares have folded and there are some who have said I can't operate on that model, so they're not taking subsidized people. They're not taking it. So there are some families still having to pay the \$45. Like I said, there are a lot of them who can't get daycare at all. So that did nothing for them.

We talk about the 10 per cent increase for seniors. I don't know about Members in this House, but I've had some disappointed seniors. I've had a number of disappointed seniors because they were under the impression, reading

the news release, that everyone was getting a cheque for \$1,400. A lot of them thought, wow, when am I getting this \$1,400 cheque? But when I explained it to them, really what they're getting is about \$25 per quarter, because they were getting \$1,300-and-something anyway. That was always in place. So we're basically upping by an extra \$100 a year, so about \$25 a quarter, that's what it is. And good for them; at least they got something, I suppose.

But the point is that many seniors and many people are not getting that, because the seniors that are getting that are the ones who are on the OAS, CPP and supplements. They're the lowest – on the very lowest end. I'm not saying we don't help people on the lower end, but the point is that if you're a senior who's living home, who worked their whole life – again, we're talking about the working person – and they have a small pension coming in from their former employer or they have a few RRSPs or whatever the case might be, they don't qualify for the Seniors' Benefit. Hence, they didn't qualify for the 10 per cent increase. And the same thing with the other low-income supplement. That's fine for someone who's on income support and we should do more for people on income support, I don't know how they survive on what they get. I'm not against that. But, again, that does not impact the working person.

We go back to these heroes we talked about, the person who – I've got people in my district, I'm sure everyone does as well – are working for minimum wage, just above minimum wage; some people are working two jobs to try to keep the wolf away from the door, they're working two jobs. There was nothing in it for them. Not a thing. This Seniors' Benefit, this low-income supplement, the Metrobus pass, none of that, they didn't benefit from any of that.

A lot of them don't own a house, they're probably paying rent, so the home insurance – and you can say, yeah, we're giving tenants' insurance. How many people actually have tenants' insurance, I wonder? I don't know what the statistic is, but I would tell you there are an awful lot of people who don't even have it. There are a lot of people in areas who don't even have insurance on their house. Lots of people. They can't afford it. Some can't afford it and some might choose to take a chance or there's

no fire department, as the Member says, close enough to even give them insurance.

So there was no benefit really to that group of people. I think that's the point that Members over here are trying to convey. I know you all know this. I know that Members over there know it. They've got to be getting the phone calls, too. It's not easy being on the government side, particularly when we're in the mess we are financially. I understand that, everybody understands that. We all know that we've been borrowing year over year over year, going deeper and deeper into debt. Something's got to give. I think everybody realizes that.

But the point is, while you try to do something for the people at the very, very bottom – and I'm not knocking it, as I said here before, perhaps people at the higher middle to high income, we can suck it up. I've had some people contact me who just said I'm just fed up with all these taxes and whatever and blah, blah, blah, but they can suck it up. They're annoyed by it. They don't want to be paying more taxes. They feel like they're never getting a break. They feel like they're being punished for their success, or being punished for the fact that they went out and got an education and now they're making good money, or they're being punished for the fact that they took a risk on a small business and they're doing okay and making some money. They feel that there is never anything in it for me. But they can suck it up.

But the group that really can't suck it up, this is the group that my colleague here for Cape St. Francis talked about, the blue-collar worker. We're talking about the same group of people. The heroes. That's the people we're talking about. These are the people who can't suck it up. They're barely surviving.

They were barely surviving before all of this and now with all the prices gone up – and I know, look, we can't control what is happening, the geopolitical events happening over in Ukraine, we can't control that. We can't control the price of oil. We can't put that on the government. It would be foolish to. And the price of diesel, which is also driving the price of groceries and everything coming across. We all know that.

But I think there are a lot of people in the province, particularly that blue-collar, working-class person who, as I said, gets up every morning and puts on their boots and goes to work and tries to provide for their family. Those are the people that really need the help. They really need a little bit of a boost and they deserve a boost for keeping the economy rolling. For paying their share. For not coming to the government, for not availing of government programs and taxpayers' programs.

That's not to knock people who have to. There are a lot of people who are on income support who have complex needs and mental health issues and all that kind of stuff. We have to look after those people. I'm not knocking that.

Now, are there some people who are on government assistance who shouldn't be? Absolutely, there are some. There is not a program that can be invented by any government that somebody, if they want to abuse it, can't. They absolutely can.

But I would say that in the greater good, we have to look after that group. If a few slip through the cracks who benefit who probably shouldn't, so be it. That is all you can do. We have to help the people at the very bottom of that scale. We have to help them survive.

But by the same token, as I say, we've got this other group who are not far above the people that are actually on assistance and they have to pay the shot for everything. They have to pay their rent. They have to pay their own heat and light bill. If they have a car, maybe a second-hand car or whatever, they have to pay for that and the gas to put in it so they can go to work. They have to eat and everything else. Like I say, a lot of these people are barely surviving now as it is.

Inflation, which is nobody's fault here in this House of Assembly on either side, has them overwhelmed. It has them overwhelmed. So there are a lot of people would say we should have done something to help those people. Give those people a hand. Throw them a bit of a lifeline.

Now, we've heard all kinds of suggestions, I think the home heat rebate would have been a

good idea. That would have been a good idea. I know when that was brought up the Minister of Finance said, oh, well, the home heat rebate is already rolled into the Seniors' Benefit, and she's right. That's what happened. But I'm not talking about your seniors on OAS, CPP, getting the supplement. As a matter of fact, as I said here the other day, the seniors who got an increase in that benefit, a number of those seniors are in long-term care. So they don't have to worry about heat. They don't have to worry about food or nothing. They're in long-term care homes. They're getting looked after anyway. These costs are not impacting them one iota but we gave them some more money.

Now, I'm not knocking giving the poor old senior over in the long-term care or the personal care home a couple of dollars so they have a little bit of money for a few treats or to get their hair done or whatever the case might be. I'm not knocking that. It's called dignity. That's called dignity: no issue.

But the fact of the matter is, we gave those people an increase, when at the same time we have a senior who, like I said, worked their whole life, got a little bit of a pension who won't qualify for nothing. We have people who are not seniors who are getting up every day and going to work in the lower-income jobs. Like I said, some of them are working two jobs, many of them being abused by their employer and, I would say, the weak legislation we have here in this province that allows that kind of nonsense to happen with all this split shifts and go home and we're not busy and stay here because we are busy and, basically, do whatever I tell you to do. They're being disadvantaged by this, but they never got a break.

That is, I would say, Mr. Speaker, my main message for today. There are lots of things I could talk about as it relates to the budget, as it relates to things going on in the province. I will save that for another time as I've only got a couple of minutes left.

I do want to, once again though, go back to the point – in my couple of minutes – that I did allude to earlier, the issue with the child care spaces. That's a big one for me. I know the Minister of Education is aware of these issues.

I've had meetings with him. I've had meetings on behalf of different child care operators with him. He's been very accommodating and we have ironed out some issues they had on them getting paid on time and different things like that, and I appreciate all that.

But going down to \$25, \$15, \$10 a day for daycare is very welcome by families and it will go a long way to help the cost of living and it will go a long way in helping increase the workforce and getting women, in particular, into the workforce or back into the workforce because you have that ability now to have affordable child care. That's been a big barrier.

So I'm not knocking that program either; it's a good thing. But the fact of the matter is that I'm hearing from people on the regular, and I am sure other Members are as well, there are not enough child care spaces – there are not enough spaces. Now, hopefully, when you bring in the prekindergarten or whatever, I think you said they're hoping it's going to open up 6,000 new spaces. I really hope that happens.

Cold comfort for the parents who are struggling right now at the moment. Hopefully, it will be good news come September. But I just want to put it out there. I know I'm not saying anything here that everyone doesn't already know, because I'm sure everyone is getting the calls. But that is an issue. It is one thing to have affordable child care; it's another thing to have available child care. And that's something that isn't happening and something that really needs to be addressed as well.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I'm done for now and I look forward to the next opportunity.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

First off, I want to thank the fine people of Topsail - Paradise for giving me the opportunity

to speak on their behalf. Always a great, fabulous district and I can't go on without also taking into consideration and thinking about those in Ukraine and the family and friends of those in Ukraine that, on a daily basis, are dealing with huge atrocities – I can't even imagine. So my heart and prayers go out to those dealing with that.

Now the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands sort of took some of my thunder away when he started talking about the title of the documents. The Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville may recall last year, when I spoke about the budget, I went through a whole list of the different titles on every budget and we put together these titles and you'd try to be inspirational and give some gusto to what you're coming out with. I'm not going to go down through that list like I did last year, but I will take it from last year to this year.

Of course, last year's budget documents were *CHANGE starts here*. That was last year. Now, we're still waiting. That was last year. So this year's title is *CHANGE is in the air*. And it's interesting, because, like the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, I've heard from different constituents and they said the title is missing a word. And I said: Well, what's that word? It's missing the word "up." That is change is up in the air. I can't disagree with them. It means stuff is yet to be resolved. It still needs to be tested, still needs to be settled, so change is up in the air.

And when you read the documents, that becomes even more true. When you read through the documents, you see that. When I look at this, there are many areas of this document that you can look at and you see the gaps in the document. We saw the five-point plan that came out just recently on helping deal with the cost of living. Our seniors who are dealing with limited budgets, limited income and pensions, they are really suffering through this. To say nothing about what's happening in the health care in terms of long-term care, private care, at-home care. I hear it every day; I see it every day. We have a population that's aging and more and more people are requiring these services. People are being split apart, and there's

nothing in there to help them there. No real solutions to help them in the budget.

A lot of times we depend on, in our communities, to help look after our seniors, to look after those who are struggling with being able to buy groceries and that, we depend a huge amount on our volunteer community. Just think about it. Where would the communities in this province be if it weren't for our volunteer groups? Where would we be?

Every community in every nook and cranny of this province have someone, or some group that volunteers and makes a huge difference in the lives of those living in those communities – every day. It could be someone simply who brings food to a senior's door, or a fire department. Where would we be without them?

But the cost of living is the issue here. We are struggling with the cost of living. You can say that we are all affected, and we are – we are all affected by the cost of living. But there are those who are affected more than others. There the other day – it was amazing, and we've all done it – I go and fill up your gas tank, compare it from a month ago, it is amazing. But most here, we can afford to do that. A lot cannot. And a lot have to make decisions between do I heat the house, do I fill my car tank up, do I go get food? All these are huge decisions for people, and they shouldn't be. Those should be the essentials that we get.

We talked about the \$600,000 going towards NASCAR. I know the minister responsible spoke very passionately about how many millions it's going to bring in to the province. Well, let me tell you, when I speak about continuous glucose monitoring, as an example, that's a solution. With the \$600,000 you've spent on NASCAR, you can buy or outfit people, probably a hundred people – actually more than 100, quite a few more people with glucose monitoring devices. And they'll reduce the strokes, they'll reduce heart attacks, they'll reduce dialysis – kidney failure requiring dialysis – they'll reduce non-traumatic amputations. They'll eliminate or reduce blindness. These will eliminate calls to 911 and the use of our ambulance service and free up emergency beds. They would save the province

far greater than \$600,000 to NASCAR will benefit for three years.

This is long term. These are life-changing devices for people. These keep people in the workforce longer, keep them participating in society longer, keep them contributing to tax dollars longer and they help our population growth, from now until eternity. It's not a quick fix when you look at the NASCAR \$600,000. That's good, I applaud it, but if you really want to have a fulsome approach, you have to look a little deeper. You have to look at what benefits the people, and health care is our crisis right now. Health care is where we need to focus.

I listened to the Premier the other day. He got up and he responded with an answer when I was talking about the health care transfers to the provinces. It was good rhetoric, but I did not get any sense that he's having discussions with the prime minister on having a more equitable formula for health care transfers here in the province.

Those transfers are based on per capita. The province with the highest rates of diabetes, of which the glucose-monitoring device might help us, the highest rate of chronic illnesses, the oldest population and declining population. We are a province here with major health care issues. You just look at the Island, but then you have to go to Labrador. Try and get to Labrador. The minister talked about putting another \$3.3 million into the travel assistance program. Was it for any improvements? No, it was because utilization. That should tell you something.

So here we are with a province that has so many unique health care challenges. We have a declining population, which means our health care transfers are not going up. They are not going up under the current formula. They are going down, and we have a sick population. We have a population of many seniors, people with chronic illness – not in the budget. You don't see anything there. You don't see anything to address that.

As I said, something like a continuous glucose-monitoring device, it is an investment that pays huge dividends. But we have done study after study after study – the Premier said today we

make sure we research before we do action. We are still studying health care.

I met with just about every health care organization there was a couple of months back. I could take my notebook, I could walk over there and I can tell the minister: This is what they need. This is the problem here. Sit down and work it out. I would hope our regional health authorities and our Department of Health do exit surveys. Dr. B, why are you leaving? Why are you not staying here? A nice little sheet survey. Then you address the issues. Oh, that's a problem.

Do you know what the real issue is here, too, when you think about it? This has been seven years – seven years. We have only had two years of COVID and COVID brought it even more to light. But when you know that 30-odd per cent of your physicians were burnt out prior to COVID, don't you think you should have looked at that as well? Don't you think you should have looked at that?

When the previous PC government, back in 2015 or 2013, came out with a plan to increase seats to look at more nurses. I don't care if you took that and stamped Liberal across it, it still made sense then and it sat for seven years. And here we are now like some light bulb went off all of a sudden and we're talking about \$30 million last year and \$400 million in the health care budget this year – it's gone up. I'm after presenting opportunities here where you can utilize the same money, and save money, and make money, and put more money back into the health care system.

The government talks about we're going to free up some time for our front-line health care workers, we're going to get them vacations. And I tell you, they deserve them, they deserve a vacation. Then some epiphany of a comment, oh, we're going to look at and figure out what the new working philosophy is for our front-line health care workers.

This not rocket science. We have a generation that like a work/life balance, no doubt about it. But we have health care professionals who went into an occupation with an expectation of working reasonable hours and having time to spend at home and time to wind down. That's

not there. Six hundred vacancies, huge number are gone casual and a huge number retiring.

Government needs to come out with an RFP. They need, not only one, they're coming out with two. One to look at the nurses: what's changed? And, again, another one they noted to come out to deal with the physicians.

Seven years to get to this point. Seven years to get to *CHANGE starts here, CHANGE is in the air, The Way Forward* – seven years. It's unbelievable and I don't know what to tell the people.

We talk about presenting facts, and I think we need to look at the facts. The minister mentioned today in response to one of my colleague's questions, there are 600-plus primary health care workers registered. But are they all working? Are they just locums? Are they retired? Are they teaching at MUN? This is the information you need. This is the full picture that you need.

We went through the Budget Speech the other day and one of the pieces that was read out that got wonderful applause was that the enrolments in K to 12 increased over 1,000; increased over 1,000, right.

The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi is over there shaking his head in agreement. But if you look at it, the enrolment last year was – I don't have them in front – oh, you've got them in here. This is the other thing; they've got them right in here in their document.

So last year, actual enrolment was 63,510. Actual enrolment this year was 63,848. So I don't know what kind of math the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi uses, but that's not over 1,000. That's 300. But you know where the 1,000 comes from? Government projected it to be lower.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. DINN: So there's obviously a philosophy here, because the Minister of Health has said in this House, I like to overpromise. Or in this case, under project, whichever. I like to overpromise, under project because guess what it does? It

makes you look better. Makes you look like you've done something. It's optics. Let's be real.

You talk about the immigration numbers. Numbers have gone up. Look at the job we did. Guess what? A huge number of those immigrants that came in are still temporary. The Minister of Immigration talked about a trend. A trend, because they had two quarters or three months where the numbers went up. I trust the bureaucrats who do this; they're experts in their field. It's in this book, they'll tell you all along. A trend is not one or two quarters going one way or the other. That is not a trend.

A trend is multiple years. That's a trend. In fact, one of those months, I think the population went up 26 people. Now that's good, heading the right direction, but no one's marching in the streets banging drums. It's not happening. So it's unfortunate to say that we're in such a need here in this province, and there have been solutions presented on how we could better invest and how we can do more long term for our people. We've done that in many studies. Study after study after study. *CHANGE is in the air, CHANGE starts here*, this is the seven-year itch now and you all know what the seven-year itch is. We need a change. We need a big change, and the change is switching sides of this House to get things done.

Thank you

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Speaker.

It sounds like we should have found some money in the budget for a new calculator, but we couldn't.

Speaker, first of all, I want to wish a very happy birthday to the Member for St. George's - Humber over there, young man. Happy birthday to him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Next, Speaker, I just want to take 30 seconds here and wish all my best to my friend Captain Lauren Goudie who is in Ukraine right now. Last post he put up was he's conflicted right now because he doesn't know whether to pick up a first aid kit, which is what he does, and help out people, or a rifle. That's a hard place to be. We can thank our lucky stars we're here today.

Speaker, first thing I want to talk about is a few good things that are happening in my district, and they are. I met with Marathon Gold, the CEO and president last week, along with their chief operating officer, Tim Williams. I had a great conversation with him. Usually it's over a beer, but this was a morning meeting so it was Baileys instead.

One thing that they did point out was the excellent working relationship they had with the current Minister of Energy. I know that he worked very hard on this, and he continues to work with me to ensure that the project stays local, local people get hired and the project is going to go ahead. It's great for my district, so I want to thank the minister for the work that he's done on that file.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Another great thing in my district, of course, is the Lionel Kelland Hospice. We have finally started the renovations on the first community hospice in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is a fantastic project; it's going ahead.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: We're going to have some beds for some people in there that wouldn't normally have them or have to be in a hallway somewhere in a hospital. No way to die whatsoever, but we're glad to see the first community hospice being opened up in Grand Falls-Windsor in due time. I look forward to going down there and hopefully volunteering and making sure that the people pass on with the dignity that they deserve. So we are happy with that.

Of course our long-term care centre, the ribbon is cut and the photos are taken. There are no patients there yet but we're hoping to get them

in there soon. I know it is going to serve the Central district very well in the future.

I also want to talk about the Premier's office. I'm going to leave rhetoric out of it because there is so much rhetoric around that it is not even funny, but the Premier's office that has been opened up in Grand Falls-Windsor, they want to know why so many people have a problem with it. By the way, Speaker, I fight off people every single week that are trying to protest the office in person. I have fought off hundreds of people waiting to go down there.

If anybody wants to know why I don't support it, why the majority of my constituents don't support it. You have some municipal members out there that they might support it, but I would argue that they're sometimes out of touch as well. Why are we against it? Well, we're putting hundreds of thousands of dollars into a –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: Sorry? I expect you to get on your feet in about 16 minutes, buddy, if you want to speak.

Sixteen more minutes and then you get up. If you want to speak, you give 'er too.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: Perfect, absolutely.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans has the floor and he can hang on to the floor, hopefully, for another 16 minutes.

The hon. the Member, please.

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

Five doctors are leaving the Central area. That is more people without a doctor. That is insane. And we're going to pump hundreds of thousands of dollars into a Premier's office that was never necessary before. It is not necessary now, I can guarantee you that. I got my boots on the ground and I have had my boots on the ground representing my district –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: – as good, if not better, than anybody else, I guarantee you.

Premier, all he had to do was reach out to me at any time. Chris, what's going on out there? We need this; we need that. That's it. That's all he had to do. Unfortunately, now, we have the Premier's office out there and the approach – if I had of been approached and said we're going to open up an office out there. We want you to work together. We truly want the best for the whole district. That is something that probably we could have swallowed in time. But to do this with all the issues we have out there, it is unreal. It is unacceptable – absolutely unacceptable.

We have home care hours cut. Simple \$10 and \$11 an hour from government for subsidizations of home care hours. So I have seniors now – and I really want you to think about this – that are told you have to stay in bed from midnight until 8 a.m. You can't get up to pee; you can't get up for a glass of water. If a fire breaks out, heaven forbid. But there's no money for the home care hours for people that truly need them in my district. But there's money to sink into an unnecessary Premier's office for hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. Why?

You know the Buchans Highway. Same thing. We got Marathon Gold going up there and we've got a highway that you'd break your neck coming down over. It's absolutely ridiculous. So now we've got some bigger trucks going in there. I hope to see something in the future plan because there's nothing that tears apart the Trans-Canada Highway like big trucks and we're going to have them.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: I hope so.

You know, the Premier stood up in his place yesterday and said he knows the system is broken. Yes, from a Premier, a doctor's point of view. We all know the system is broken but does he know the effects of how it's broken and how it affects people. This is where the out of touch – we hear it every single day, especially since the budget – how out of touch so many people are.

And I guarantee you – I don't say there's anybody in this House without a family doctor. I might be mistaken. I might be mistaken.

AN HON. MEMBER: Without?

C. TIBBS: Without, that cannot get medical help.

AN HON. MEMBER: I don't.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: Well, that's great. But you continue on and you look at the people who are – I know a guy who's waiting on an MRI. He can't get it. No idea when he can get an MRI. That's terrible.

So what about these people out in Grand Falls-Windsor, they were waiting weeks for a blood test – a blood test. If you have a life-altering situation or some sort of a health concern that's going to affect the rest of your life and you can't get a blood test done. We know we're in trouble. We truly are and do you know what? That's what we've got to look at is the effects. Everybody knows that it's broken, but until you truly see the effects, do you know what? Everybody's out of touch until you can see the true effects that this has on the people of the Province.

I'll go back to the Premier just one more time. Yesterday, the Premier was asked after seven years in government, the health care system continues to suffer. His answer was: While it feels like seven years, it's only been a few years for me.

The hypocrisy is unreal. The Premier will stand up there and he'll throw jabs about Muskrat Falls all day long, about this crowd over here, but when it comes to himself and his own career – for seven years as our health care system has been demolished, the Premier stands up and says I've only been here for a year and a half. Wear it. Wear it as the Premier. That's what I say: wear it.

You know, Speaker, we also have rotational workers still here in Newfoundland and Labrador and they don't get recognized enough. When you're talking about anywhere up around 18,000 rotational workers, with families, with

children, that tax base, if that leaves, we're in trouble.

We're in a lot of trouble if these blue-collar workers, both men and women, pick up and decide to leave this province, and let me tell you something: Alberta, Saskatchewan, BC – they're making it real attractive, I can promise you that. I get phone calls every week to go back drilling. Every week I get calls to go back drilling on a certain rig up in Alberta or BC or Saskatchewan or Manitoba. And they're making it very, very attractive.

So we need to do the same thing for our rotational workers here in Newfoundland and Labrador, for our blue-collar workers. And let them know that they are thought about; they're not lost in translation along the way. These blue-collar workers that are working 50 and 60 hours a week, I've said it before and I'll say it again: If you're working that much, by God you shouldn't be up at 2:30 in the morning thinking about how you're going to buy bread and groceries the next day.

That's our reality now. Unfortunately, that's our reality. And it's a sad reality, but that's the reality that we live in. We need to ensure that we keep our rotational workers here. I would go as far as to say maybe set off an initiative to give them some sort of incentive with their travel. Maybe a tax break in the future with their travel. If you want to leave and come to Newfoundland and Labrador from Alberta but still work in Alberta. Well, b'y, do you know what? We're going to give you a break on your flights as a tax incentive.

Who knows, maybe something like that can work. I guarantee you that people would come back here. Because Newfoundland and Labrador is the most beautiful province in this entire country, as broken as it is right now. But we will come back from this, I promise you.

Speaker, I'm wondering about future exploration when it comes to oil and gas. The way it sounds now from the feds is that Bay du Nord will be our transition program, which is – do you know what? We all know we've got to get there. But, again, Newfoundland and Labrador is at the cutting edge of oil and gas and I believe that we are the future of this planet of oil and gas.

So one day I'd love to sit down with the minister and talk about future explorations and where it comes from because, in my opinion, Bay du Nord should not be the last one at all.

The Leader of the NDP, of course – he was my teacher in high school, I have a great amount of respect for the man – but we do differ on this. I believe we have years –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: My favourite Dinn he said.

We have years and years of oil exploration left. I believe that it still has a part in our future. I believe it has a huge part in our future. We are an oil and gas province and we should not shy away from that. We have to embrace that with everything we have. It provides so many things. It provides young families with their vehicles, their mortgage payments, food on the table. We have to stop shying away from this. I get the transition, but the transition will not be 100 per cent. It just won't. It really will not.

We will not walk around with wooden telephones; I guarantee it. I would argue that at any given time 70 or 75 per cent of anything you see in a room is petroleum related. So to come off of this – I'm all for electric vehicles and whatnot down the road, but we have to continue to embrace Newfoundland and Labrador as an oil and gas province.

Bay du Nord, of course, falls in line with this, and we're all grateful to have it, don't get me wrong. It's great news, but I don't know about anybody else, I'm sick and tired of every time the feds give us a little bit, even though we know it's true, we put in the work. The works been done. The Premier said it himself: it stands on its own merits. I will not thank Ottawa for giving the 10th province in Canada their due. We don't thank Ottawa for that, that's their job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: We have Newfoundlanders and Labradorians working their butts off to pay their income tax. No, we don't thank Ottawa for that. This should have been sanctioned a long time ago, way before it was. I know that a lot of work went into it, but I would argue that we are going

to thank all the voices throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, not here, but the voices outside these walls for speaking up and letting Ottawa know that this isn't right, this is our project and it's going to go ahead. I hope to see future exploration as well.

My last couple of minutes I want to talk about mental health and how it affects so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, so many Canadians, but a special group of mental health. The young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are part of the LGBTQ+ community.

For those of you who don't know – I'm sure most of you do – my son Declan came out to us in the ninth grade, and we were so proud of him. He represents so many young people throughout this province who deal with so much on their plate, afraid to come out. When they do come out their ostracized, they're bullied; they're picked on. Unfortunately, this is the reality that we live in.

I'm going to read something that my son wrote, because, in my opinion, when it comes to budgets, we need more supports for our LGBTQ+ community and especially the young people that are suffering right now. And if you'll indulge me, Speaker, I'd like to read what my son wrote, verbatim.

I can relate to the quote, don't just be another brick in the wall on a spiritual level. I am undoubtedly the furthest thing possible from another brick in the wall. In fact, I don't even know where this wall is. I'm an eccentric, mentally questionable, gay barista, ballet dancer who idolizes Mayo Angelou and Taylor Swift. I also live this interesting life all in a narrow-minded small town in good old Newfoundland, which is ironically known for its kind people.

I understand my hardships made me into who I am today, but were things like getting chased into woods or filmed at school really necessary to my character development? I don't think it was.

School sucks, it is awful, but high school is a whole different realm of insanity. You would think the typical Neanderthal hockey boys would grow into decent human beings with age, but boy would you be wrong. I came out in the

summer of the ninth grade right before high school. I know, great timing, right?

Grade 10 was a weird year, but I had some incredible people around me, so I cannot diminish it completely. But for now, let's talk about the horrors of my first month of Grade 11.

Our first French presentation was such a cool project, he says, talking about your career wishes after high school. I have an impeccable taste for fashion, and I did my presentation about moving to Milan and pursuing fashion. To no one's surprise, after my presentation, there was an issue. Some airheaded boys decided to, not just challenge me but also challenge the teacher. These boys recorded me, while laughing and calling me slurs. The teacher fumed at these boys, standing up for me like not many people would do, scaring them into next week. However, I was more concerned if they'd got the shot on my good side.

You get used to immaturity towards you when you take the untraveled path and, at some point, you have to shake it off. There are low points on every road, but if you keep going, you'll just be fine. Not conforming to society's general standards is a strength, for I am not just a brick, but a purple brick or a sparkly brick. I am different, but I do the job as well as any other red, rough brick. For this is not the only run-in I've had with ignorant homophobes.

I went for a run in September like I do every day and a car full of Grade 12s passed me, yelling every homophobe's favourite slur. I laughed it off at first, texted my friends, let their boyfriends deal with it. But the issue came when they came back four more times. After getting no reaction out of me at all, they decided to chase me in their car into the woods. I was not prepared to be on the evening news so I ran. I hate to give them a reaction but it beats getting hit by a cheap 2012 Toyota Corolla. I was a little shaken but once again I got over it. It takes a lot to break me, more than any moronic high school boy could ever accomplish.

I am unapologetically me and I refuse to conform to anything less than that. If you always exist as your own brick in the wall, you can never compare to anyone else. You are simply true to yourself. There is no reality I can imagine

where I am anything other than my own character. I walk the halls of my high school and see a hundred of the same girls in white Vans, black lulu leggings and a basic crewneck or another hundred hockey boys with hats ever so slightly balanced on their heads, sweatpants around the knees and to top it off, socks and slides.

You could pick me out of a crowd of 500 people. I value colour theory, I dress to impress and I try to look expensive every day. My point is that if every person in a room was exactly the same, the world would be so boring and nothing would progress. We exist in a society that praises normalizing a general look but refuses to normalize individuality. People who stray from being a brick in the wall have a harder path, but, as cliché as it sounds, it helps you grow into who you are destined to become.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much and my son thanks you very much as well.

I'll leave you with this. There is a Mark Wahlberg movie and it is called Joe Bell. It's about the father of a gay son who takes his own – it is a true story – the son takes his own life and writes a suicide letter before he does it. I just want to say to my son, thank you for writing this instead of a suicide letter.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

I now recognize the hon. Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development and responsible for the District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

J. ABBOTT: Thank you Speaker.

I will sit, I think. Well, first and foremost, I want to thank the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans for his eloquent presentation and certainly the letter from his son. Certainly, my congratulations to Declan and for all he's prepared to stand for, for himself, for his peers and within his community. He is certainly a role model and somebody I hope to meet whether

I'm in Grand Falls or when he's next in St. John's.

So please pass along my best wishes.

I want to recognize as well the Member for Bonavista. I am glad to see him back in the House and maybe he can –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. ABBOTT: – speak to us on his health care journey of recent and so we can learn from that as well.

I see that there's a lot of energy on the Opposition side today, which is good to see. It keeps everybody attuned and alert to the issues at hand.

I also want to just call out the Minister of Finance, obviously, who is not here today. Presumably, she is listening and for somebody who was trying to avoid COVID leading up to the Budget Speech, it sought its revenge and now she is out for a few days along with the minister of Labrador Affairs, which is –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. ABBOTT: – unfortunate that they're not here with us today.

SPEAKER: I remind the Member not to identify the presence or absence of a Member.

J. ABBOTT: Okay. It was only to wish them well.

Thank you, Speaker, and I apologize.

In terms of looking at the budget that we're debating here today, there are a number of themes, obviously, running through the budget that carry over from last year and I assume will carry in to subsequent budgets. One is around reducing the deficit, and the government has been successful in grappling with the deficit. We know, literally, two years ago we were on the brink of not paying our bills and had run up a significant deficit.

This administration has identified that is really priority number one, if we are to sustain the

delivery of public services for the longer term that we have to bring that deficit in line, balance it over the next couple of years and eventually run surpluses so that, in fact, we can pay down the debt that we've accrued over the past 20 years or more, that is now approaching \$16 billion to \$17 billion. That's a direct net debt that the government owes, in addition to the debt for Muskrat Falls and for other public debt that's accrued including pensions.

We still have a long way to go, and the Greene report certainly outlines that in spades, as to the debt that this province is carrying and our ability to carry it is always in question. But through sound financial management, we are at least able to borrow money to pay our bills and have the confidence of the credit-rating agencies that we have a serious, deliberate and politically supported deficit reduction plan. That's auguring well for us for the present and into the future.

We can go back to the 1930s, we can go back to the 70s, we can go back to the early 90s, when the province was in difficult financial situations and, again, our ability to deliver services was in question. We were seeing rollbacks. We were seeing significant cuts in public services. Arbitrary measures having to be put in place that nobody was satisfied with. But these are the things we had to do.

I'm very keen and concerned always about our financial situation. One of the reasons I got involved in politics was that I felt, feel and will continue to feel that we can and must do better in managing our financial situation here in government. I know the Minister of Finance and the Premier and the Cabinet are all in one approach here, in that that's something we are committed to doing. That being said, we recognize we have to take a balanced approach. It isn't reducing the deficit at all cost, it is how we do that in a reasoned, acceptable way while we still invest in public services that are essential to our growth and to meet the needs of the public.

So this year's budget, while we reduced the deficit significantly from last year and we're on the road to balancing the budget, we are able to invest in health care significantly. The Minister of Health has spoken to many of the initiatives that have been funded to deliver services.

We heard from the Minister of Education about the expenditures that we're able to meet and increase expenditures in that budget while we're also growing the student population, which is definitely a positive sign of growth in the economy that will, in turn, payback in terms of economic development. That, in turn, generates taxes, which, in turn, generates the dollars we need to supply services in the future.

The Minister of Justice and Attorney General spoke of what the investments were going to be in the areas of his responsibility, whether it's additional policing services, whether it's certainly a radio system for the emergency services. Those kinds of things that we're able to invest in. We're investing in environmental protection, we're investing in industry development, we're investing in the arts and we're investing in the film industry. All of that at the same time it's trying to reduce the deficit.

So the Minister of Finance has taken a very balanced approach here and one that I certainly support. She's also looked at how our other social services, whether it's housing, our income support programs, support for our disability community and supports for our seniors are also part of that balanced approach.

We have a lot more to do. We have to continue to invest in the future. So when we see things like a gold mine development out in Central Newfoundland, which we put through our environmental process, followed all the rules and now we will have the advent of a very strong mining industry, yet again, in Central Newfoundland. And that will only spur further developments.

We're seeing the expansion of the nickel mine up in Labrador in Voisey's Bay and how that is contributing to jobs and economic growth and taxes for the Treasury. We're seeing other staking of claims, some of the largest numbers that we've had in our history because of the potential that our mining industry has for this province and for growth.

And really to top it off with the Bay du Nord development, now that that's been approved and gone through the federal environmental review process, we now have a regeneration and reinvigoration of a very substantial industry that

will only grow this economy significantly over, literally, days, weeks and years to come.

So I'm looking forward to its sanctioning and then we get on with the job of building the supply vessels and the rigs and everything else that we will need for that particular facility. It will generate further interest, I'm sure, by other companies which we already know are here to expand in the offshore.

Within the context of a net zero by 2050, the rules are clear for any future offshore production facility, it must meet very stringent environmental standards, and those I certainly concur with. I think that will only set the positive approach for the industry as it's moving ahead, literally in the planning stages, as we speak.

Part of the success, I think, of some of the investments that we're able to make here in our public services in recent years has to be attributed to the federal government. Our partnership with the federal government when it comes to child care and early learning. The fact that we can now plan for and budget for \$10-a-day daycare. That's significant. The fact that we will now be able to have both junior kindergarten and pre-kindergarten for our young families, that's essential for economic growth and for women in particular to get back in the workforce and stay in the workforce. That's something I've been advocating for, for quite some time. So I'm quite pleased with that.

The fact that we have other investments through the period of COVID, because of the federal government's support, the money they put out through CERB that allowed our economy to really continue to thrive through the two years of COVID. That's been significant and would not have been done without the federal government.

There's also an area that I'm close to, as minister responsible for Housing, is the significant investments in housing by the federal government up to now and in the current federal budget. We will see significant increase in social housing because of the partnership we have with the federal government. It is helping us with our shelter program, it is helping us with our supportive housing programs and it is helping us with our rent supplements: all of which is

growing the housing services and housing stock here in the province. There is more to come.

I'm very confident that the partnership we have with the federal government will only reap further dividends in the years to come. With the agreement in Ottawa between the federal Liberal Party and the NDP, we will have stability and allow the federal government to map out further investments to support our government in the years to come.

Now, pivotal to all of that, of course, is the support through rate mitigation on Muskrat Falls, the fact that we are going to see, really, extra billions of federal support for that project to allow it to come on stream and to deliver hydro rates at 14.5 cents a kilowatt, as opposed to double under the previous plan. So that's a significant investment by the federal government, a partnership that is delivering results for this province. We should not certainly take that for granted, because we're not seeing any previous administration being prepared to support the province in the way the federal government is currently doing.

When you look at *CHANGE is in the air* – and I know some people on the other side were taking liberties with the theme. But interestingly enough, on Saturday with our day of action, when we on this side went out to our districts to talk to people in the markets, at the front doors, on the telephone, the very first person I spoke with I asked him: What's your reaction? What's happening? This was a small businessman here in the city and he said quite clearly and quite honestly, without me prompting: There's actually change in the air.

He felt over the previous 24 hours with the announcement on Bay du Nord, with the very positive provincial budget, with a positive federal budget that the feeling within the business community, within the neighbourhoods that he was living, that people were expressing a very positive attitude. Over the winter, people were feeling more neutral, not commenting too much, very little conversation happening and all of a sudden, within a 24-hour period, that he said: John, there is change in the air. So he couldn't have said it any better and our budget couldn't have said it or promoted it any better, and I agree substantially with that theme.

We need to build, as a province, on how we capitalize on this change that is in the air. How do we continue to encourage our small businesses to invest? How do we support our larger businesses to expand? How do we encourage our youth, our high school students – we have a class here today – how do we encourage them to stay in the province, to attend university or college or to do other training so that they will find a place in the future economy of this province and have a future life here in this province?

I think that is something that is incumbent on all of us here in this House and the leadership across the province, to build on the theme of change, positive change, that will support and encourage people to stay in this province. As the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, to make sure that he has the people behind him when he is out talking to immigrants, that they will come to this province, settle down, start a job, start families and to stay.

We have a big opportunity here in front of us and the fact that the population is starting to grow. The fact that the economy is stable with a significant growth potential. We only have positive themes to build on.

It's easy to be negative, it is easy to criticize and I accept the role of the Opposition in doing that. But at the same time, let's not burn our own ship while we're doing that. Let's make sure we can present to the outside world, to other Canadians, to Europeans, to Americans, to whomever that this is a place to invest, this is the place to grow and prosper and this is the place to have the quality of life, that I would argue, like none other on the globe.

In my Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, one of the things we're working on within that larger context is what can we do, what do we need to do to support people who may not have the resources, financial and otherwise, to contribute to society and to the economy. We're looking at our Poverty Reduction Strategy within a broader context. We're looking at in the context of a social and economic well-being plan.

What are the attributes and factors that we need to identify and support as a province to achieve a

better province? We're looking at all of those factors. We're looking at things like what would the minimum wage be and should be. Obviously, there is a review taking place. What should we be doing with income support payments and how do we increase those in the short, medium and longer term to support people that need that support? What do we do for early childhood and learning programs? What do we do for education and training of youth? How do all those factors together support growth in the economy, supports for individuals who need that support and, at the same time, making sure that we can do that within our fiscal resources.

Within that context, we're also looking at things like basic income. What could that look like? What should it look like? What are we able to invest in if the federal government is with us, if the federal government is not with us, at this point in time? Are there certain groups in the province that we can support?

Speaker, as I clue up here, I just want to congratulate the Minister of Finance for a very positive, successful and well-received budget. I'm looking forward to the next one because we build on that road of reducing the deficit, transforming the delivery of public services, having a balanced approach, investing in our future and partnership with the federal government where it benefits us to do so and, at the same time, being able to deliver on the essential public services we all come to rely on.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: I thought you were going to say seeing no further speakers, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Adjourn debate.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for CBS, that this House do now adjourn. I think there are Estimates for Municipal and Provincial Affairs at 6 p.m.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The motion is that this House do stand adjourned.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

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