



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume L

FIRST SESSION

Number 10

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Thursday

June 3, 2021

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Before we start our regular business, I would like to rule on the point of order yesterday by the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

There was no point of order. It was just a disagreement between two Members.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we will hear Members' statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Conception Bay East - Bell Island, Placentia - St. Mary's, Humber - Bay of Islands, Mount Pearl - Southlands and Ferryland.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I speak today to honour a constituent of mine. Mrs. Bonita Spracklin became involved with the Army Cadet corps 2410, Bell Island, in 1992 as a parent volunteer because three of her children were cadets and five of her seven children became members of the corps. She was instrumental in forming the Parents Committee, which is now the support group. As a founding member of the Parents Committee, she spearheaded a huge fundraiser to purchase much-needed band equipment for the corps.

In 1994, she was encouraged to join the cadet instruction program. She enrolled in the necessary courses to move herself through the ranks of the cadet movement and obtain the highest rank possible, that being captain. When she graduated with her rank of captain, she was named top candidate for the captain's qualification course. She accomplished all this while still raising her very young family.

She held various positions in the corps throughout her tenure. In 2009, she accepted the position of commanding officer until her retirement on May 2, 2021.

Captain Spracklin has the distinction of being the first female commanding officer of the Bell

Island Army Cadet corps, which has more than 100 years service. For her 29 years she served the youth on Bell Island and said that if she made the difference in the life of one youth then her work had been rewarded.

I ask all Members to thank Bonnie for her service to the youth of Bell Island.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Karen Corcoran and Annie Walsh, two students from my District of Placentia - St. Mary's are this year's winners of the 2021 provincial Sharing Our Culture Anti-Racism Poster Contest.

Karen and Annie are students of Fatima Academy in St. Bride's. More than 300 students took part in the contest. Karen said that being from a small community she hasn't seen a lot of racism in her area but sees it happening in a lot of places around the world, the country and the province.

Karen's first-place poster for the Grades 10 to 12 category titled All Colours Are Beautiful is a drawing of four females of different races. Karen's idea came from the attention that anti-racism has been getting in the media.

Annie won first place in the Grade 7 to 9 category with the colourful drawing featuring flags of the world with the words: Where I'm from does not define me. Annie said she has a low tolerance for racist attitudes so it was really important for her to do this as it annoys her how some people are not accepting at all.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Karen Corcoran and Annie Walsh.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, on May 3, 2021, a well-known and respected resident of Benoit's Cove passed away at the age of 78.

Bernard White was known as the person who always leant a helping hand, a community leader and a man of values. He was an active member of the Qalipu First Nation band and served four terms as the Benoit's Cove ward councillor. He was very passionate about the Indigenous ancestry and culture and was a strong advocate for those fighting for recognition during the membership process.

Bernard worked diligently supporting the Qalipu band and the issues they pursue, in particular, the issue related to the fisheries. He also served as a councillor with the town council of Humber Arm South for three years.

Bern was a dedicated family man and will be sadly missed by his wife of 57 years, Leona; his children: Edward, Christina, Pamela, Diane, Karen, Mandy; his nine grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; and his Qalipu council family and many friends.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join with me in offering our condolences to Bernard's family. Bernard, from your immediate family and your Qalipu family: Mi'soqo app welteskatulti'kw – until we all meet again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mount Pearl has long been recognized not just for its top-notch sport and recreational infrastructure, but for a sporting fraternity comprised of amazing individuals who give so much of themselves to our community. One such citizen that I wish to recognize today is my good friend Mr. Herb Jenkins, affectionately known by many as the Senator.

Herb has been an active and vital member of the Mount Pearl Soccer Association since the 1970s and has coached many different teams in local, provincial and national tournaments. He was the first Newfoundlander to become a national referee, and shared that expertise with many through his local officiating clinics. He has also been named Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Association Provincial Coach of the Year and has been inducted into the Mount Pearl Soccer Association and Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Association Hall of Fame.

While his contributions to soccer are many, his ongoing contribution to our community has gone well beyond his chosen sport. This evening I look forward to celebrating with him as he's given the honour of becoming the fifth Honorary Life Member within the Mount Pearl Soccer Association Hall of Fame.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating this amazing individual.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

I would like to recognize many groups of volunteers, businesses and individuals in the District of Ferryland who took the initiative to organize a cleanup in their towns and communities.

One of the major cleanups was organized in the Town of Witless Bay where, for many years, there were several wreckages of vehicles and RVs abandoned and left to rust on Gull Pond Road. A group of volunteers from Witless Bay and surrounding communities, along with heavy equipment operators, construction companies and other businesses in the area volunteered their time and equipment to help make this event a huge success.

As well, many other individuals and groups organized cleanups in several other towns and communities within the district. It is great to see so many members of the district doing their part

to keep our community clean and beautiful. As your MHA for the District of Ferryland, I cannot thank you enough.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in recognizing the several volunteers in the district who came together in keeping our communities clean.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today marks the second anniversary of the final report of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; an occasion made even more sombre by the discovery of the remains of 215 Indigenous children at a residential school in British Columbia. This discovery has deeply impacted us all.

Earlier today, the federal government launched the National Action Plan to address racism and the disproportionate levels of violence against Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals across Canada. Since the release of the national inquiry's final report, we have been working with our federal, provincial and territorial colleagues to develop the National Action Plan and remain committed to continuing this work going forward.

On the local level, we will now focus our work on talking with Indigenous peoples in Newfoundland and Labrador to address the calls for justice from a provincial perspective. While our continued work with our colleagues across the country is important, our priority remains the safety and well-being of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join with me today in honouring the strength and

resilience of Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals in our province and across the country. I ask you all to commit to being part of the change needed to ensure these individuals live in a province free from fear of violence and discrimination.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I join with the minister in honouring the strength and resilience of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited and LGBTQQIA+ individuals across our country.

The final report of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is a reminder that we all must do our part to address the calls for justice and to build a better country and province for all residents to feel safe, be supported and prosper.

The discovery of the remains of 215 Indigenous children in British Columbia is a disturbing reminder that Indigenous peoples face disproportionate levels of violence. As provincial leaders, we must work in step with Indigenous leaders to implement the calls for action. Indigenous leaders and communities must guide our actions and approaches.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement, and join her in recognizing the anniversary of the final report of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

We recognize that reconciliation is not just about saying the right things but also listening to our Indigenous partners and following their lead. The provincial government must now take the next step and work hard to implement the recommendations that came out of this report.

Collectively, we have a lot of work ahead of us. The tasks before us call for more resources, not fewer. Let's do the right thing and show our commitment to reconciliation with our words and our deeds.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

J. ABBOTT: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize May 30 to June 5 as National AccessAbility Week.

This week is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the valuable contributions of persons with disabilities in our communities throughout our province.

Persons with disabilities are leaders, mentors and role models whose diverse perspectives and experiences enrich our society in every way.

In particular, I would like to recognize the Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, as well as members of the community of and for persons with disabilities who work tirelessly on behalf of their fellow citizens.

By sharing their experiences and expertise, they have been instrumental in shaping the direction of our proposed accessibility legislation that will move our province forward in a way that promotes dignity, fairness and respect for all.

I would also like to recognize the efforts of the many individuals, communities, businesses and workplaces that are actively working with persons with disabilities to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility and promote

inclusion in our province. The value of their work can never be overstated.

When the principles of accessibility and inclusion are embraced, a world of opportunities opens for all. This was evident last week on Froude Avenue here in St. John's, where the Premier, federal Minister O'Regan and I opened new housing units, four of which are fully equipped for persons with disabilities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

I join with the minister in recognizing the valuable contributions of persons with disabilities. In each and every community there are contributions by individuals with disabilities. Many are involved with charities, sporting events, community programs and their involvement is a major asset to our province.

Many disabled athletes are an inspiration for our disabled children attempting to overcome disabilities. We remember Paralympic star Liam Hickey returning to a motorcade after winning the silver medal in sledge hockey. We remember Katarina Roxon, the pride of Kippens, returning to a gold medal from the 2016 Rio Summer Paralympics.

These individuals and many others have shown leadership at provincial, national and world events. Their leadership, their dedication, their experiences at world events make our province proud and help shape the need for accessibility legislation.

It is important to recognize the contribution of efforts by individuals, community groups, workplaces and the list goes on, in ensuring barriers are knocked down and inclusion is a necessity. Let's continue to ensure the importance of accessibility and that we are all provided the same opportunities to succeed in life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement and join him in recognizing National Accessibility Week. In Estimates last night, we discussed the upcoming accessibility legislation in broad-brush strokes. Let me say that we look forward to seeing a draft of it later in the year, and welcome any opportunity to advance integration of all persons with disabilities into the broader community. In particular, we ask that any forthcoming legislation mandate the incorporation of universal design principles into new builds, both in public and private sectors.

Finally, we also ask that government amend the Elections Act to ensure that those with disabilities aren't disproportionately disenfranchised ever again in the voting process, as unfortunately was the case in the recent provincial election.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let me summarize some of what we learned since Monday's budget. The government is eliminating the English School District, the Centre for Health Information and NL911 as separate entities, without knowing the impact on spending, service delivery or jobs. For all they know, it could leave the province worse off.

I ask the Premier: Why did your government choose to make these choices rashly and blindly without knowing the facts?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

As the Minister of Finance has already spoken to this, we see there are significant deficiencies to be had. In my six months prior to this, I saw inefficiencies within the system, duplication of services. These are the type of efficiencies, the type of budgetary restraints that we need to put forward to protect the future of the province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We would have thought that these efficiencies would have been based on analysis that we have yet to see any documentation. *The Economy* document published with *Budget 2021* states that the province's population is projected to decline by nearly half a per cent this year. In fact, the document projects population losses for five years in a row.

When will addressing the steady population decline by stimulating real job growth become a priority for the Premier?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question.

Obviously, jobs are essential to, I hope, every single Member of this House in protecting the future of this province. We have recognized the demographic crisis. Perhaps I'm the most to have spoken about this. I've been very open about this; this is a silent crisis that is facing the province right now. I fully recognize it; our government fully recognizes it, which is why we put such an important emphasis on job creation and growing our population through immigration as well as retention, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Economy document also projects that employment will start declining after next year and keep declining year after year for as far into the future as the model projects.

When will creating the conditions for job growth become one of the Premier's top priorities?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, we're certainly focused on the economy and creating jobs. I think that's reflected in the budget. I believe that we've hit the right balance of creation while solving inefficiencies within the system to correct our structural deficit that's been left here by previous governments, including the one opposite, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During our debate this week, we asked a multitude of times to outline exactly the data that would show that and the process forward. We've yet to get that. Mr. Speaker, we're very skeptical and for an obvious reason.

Mr. Speaker, through an ATIPP request, an individual obtained some of the costs for the Premier's Big Reset team. The people of this province forked over almost \$100,000 for private office space and personal accommodations, at a time where every dollars counts.

Can the Premier explain to the people of this province why spending taxpayers' money in this way was necessary when there is plenty of office space available in government-owned buildings?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question.

Of course, all of this work done by the Premier's Economic Recovery Team was done on a volunteer basis. There was some cost incurred, of course, in the operations of such an important team and such an important undertaking. We believe that this was a good investment of our money for the results that we achieved to be able to find efficiencies, think outside the box and present new ideas to the people of the province so that we can create a path forward, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, it's day three of trying to get some details on the budget. The only answer we got yesterday certainly needs further clarification.

Does the minister know why \$2.5 million for geoscience data in the Department of Industry is a, quote: COVID-related unforeseen expenditure budgeted in Consolidated Fund Services under COVID Related Contingency?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They got it wrong yesterday and now they're trying again.

Mr. Speaker, we put the \$2.5 million as an additional investment toward mining. I'm sure the Members opposite are supportive of that particular expenditure. We put it under the COVID contingency because we want to support mining coming out of COVID. We're doing additional exploration.

It is good for the province; it is good for job creation. We have a lot of minerals in this province that the world needs, Mr. Speaker. The whole reason why we're putting in additional money for exploration is to be able to create jobs. I'm sure the Member opposite understands that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, we're all for creating jobs, it's just when you see something that says it's related to an unforeseen expenditure. Clearly, if the minister wants to put money into mining, put it into mining and we'll be glad to support it.

Mr. Speaker, the lack of detail and non-committal language in this budget is a major problem, but it's not just us saying that. The president of the Nurses' Union talks about a lack of details on health care cuts. The president of NAPE agrees and talks about lack of details in the budget. The president of the federation goes further and I repeat: "There was a lot of 'we'll review stuff,' a lot of political nonsense words I guess that sound good but probably means something else. I'm very nervous about what exactly that does mean"

I ask the minister: Have you had discussions with the president of the Nurses' Union and the president of NAPE and provided them with details of the budget?

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

S. COADY: Again, Mr. Speaker, they get it wrong.

Mr. Speaker, we can go back and forth all day on this. The Labrador North Chamber of Commerce: "We are optimistic government will move forward with reducing debt expenses, deficit and borrowing.... But addressing debt needs to be balanced with stimulating the economy. Government should look to Labrador" We certainly have in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

TD Bank: "In what will likely be well received by investors and rating agencies, Budget 2021 commits to significantly improving Newfoundland and Labrador's fiscal position in coming years." I can continue and go on, Mr. Speaker.

We will meet with all stakeholders, we will continue the dialogue and we will make sure that everyone understands the path forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Clearly, Mr. Speaker, she hasn't provided the details of the budget to these people. The words I just spoke are their words, not mine.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, for three days we've asked about details in the budget, and for three days we've been refused an answer. The people of the province deserve better.

Once again, I will ask simply: Do you know, Minister, how many people will lose their jobs and how much money will be saved by moving the English School District, the Centre for Health Information and NL911 into government?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I have to point out very clearly that I find it ironic they don't seem to be supporting this move, when very clearly in Estimates last year they advocated for us to do exactly what we've done: fold the English School District into the department.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, we did not say anything about not supporting it; we simply are asking for the details. The people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve to know the details.

Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about evidence-based decision-making. Well, it's a lot more credible when you show us the evidence.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the 2020 Pre-Budget Consultation document reads: "Today

government is focused on attrition, which allows for a gradual reduction of government positions”

I ask the minister: Do you know if attrition is still a practice? If so, do you know how many positions are projected to be removed this year through attrition?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we will get a better understanding of what the fiscal and operational efficiencies are when we're able to actually complete the transition.

I do want to point out, Mr. Speaker, in last year's Estimates their side of the House said: "... we look at a school board and the Department of Education would become one streamlined and would operationalize and look after the schools.”

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, they went on to say: I think it may be top-heavy, that every single entity is top-heavy, but if you merge them together there may be resources and dollars that, all of a sudden, we can move to alleviate the stresses in the system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

T. OSBORNE: I can go on, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, they are looking for our assistance again. We're looking for analysis, Mr. Speaker; they know. They're just playing games, we're looking for analysis. The minister knows what we're looking for. Maybe by the end of June we may get a couple answers but I'm not holding out much hope.

Mr. Speaker, the province witnessed the superb work completed on the infamous pothole located on Bennet's Road. It has been four years since the Auditor General recommended a structured maintenance program and system to track roads that need work.

I ask the minister: Will you table a priority list of roads that need work?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I won't get into, I guess, the tactics, I'll call it, of the Opposition Leader in terms of Bennett's Road, because what that person failed to comment on in his interview was that there was a tender that was awarded last year for the road to be done. He left that out; I wonder why he left that out?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I need to hear the speaker.

E. LOVELESS: Anyway, to the question by the Opposition House Leader, in terms of a list, I don't have it right now, but I did work on it last night to late hours. We will have a list coming out very soon that I am looking forward to because there is going to be work done on our roads in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, he's a year late, so we'll keep waiting. We'll wait on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's hard to hear the speakers.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker.

He's obviously a year late and we'll wait like we're waiting on answers on the budget, we'll wait on answers about the roadwork too. I guess one of these days we may get some answers; we may get something done in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the pictures on Bennett's Road speak for themselves.

The minister's department has been managing the former Grace site, which has become an eyesore and an embarrassment for the City of St. John's. The minister's department has been sitting on environment reports and market evaluations for years. When is the government going to finally act?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A very good question. That has been sitting around since 2006, so there have been several administrations that have been dealing with this. I did an interview on that and I agree that action is required and we're looking into it; we're looking at all options.

I am going to tell you what I am looking at: the option that I am concerned about is to make sure that piece of land, I get the fair market return for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Mr. Speaker, in the Budget Speech government announced it would begin to tax residents to cover the cost of road maintenance. We all remember the public outcry over the approach that government had in collecting garbage in these areas.

Does the minister know how much residents can expect to pay?

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question. As we've made it clear, regionalization is a priority for this government. We want to ensure that access and accessible services of adequate nature are available to all residents of this province. If we can do that through a mechanism by which we share some of the services and everybody has an equitable investment in that process, then that's something that this government is interested in making sure that services are available to residents as they need them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: I don't disagree there, Mr. Speaker, but how much was the question.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister know how many residents who have never gotten a tax bill from government in their lives with respect to this will now suddenly be expected to pay?

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you again for the question. I do welcome the opportunity to share about 9 per cent of the residents of this province who live in unincorporated or local service districts who have, at times, been exposed to reduced services or maybe less than adequate services. So by making this regionalization claim and hoping to move forward on this we have the opportunity to provide services to those people in those districts. We want to do that in a manner which is fair and equitable for all people in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: The minister speaks loudly when she says that she is going to design a plan before

she goes ahead and does something in relation to LSDs or unincorporated areas. So that is good.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Premier informed media that our province would not be offering a tourism incentive program similar to that of New Brunswick.

I ask the Premier: Why wasn't this considered by his government?

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

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Technical difficulty.)

SPEAKER: You've finally been silenced.

You have to carry on.

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question. Yesterday, was the brightest day in our tourism (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: – since 2019, the fall of 2019, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you we've heard from dozens and dozens of tourism operators who are so happy, so relieved to be where we are. Do you know what we've heard from them about what this government has done and what this budget did just on Monday of this week? Thirty million dollars for tourism supports; \$25 million for broadband and cellular expansion.

Mr. Speaker, there's so much. I can keep going. I hope there's a supplementary, Mr. Speaker, because the industry is so excited about this program and we're back on the road to recovery in this wonderful industry in our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: There is indeed a supplementary, Minister.

The Premier's Advisory Council on Tourism recommended an incentive program – which was the first question that you didn't answer – be explored for the residents of Atlantic Canada and the region.

I ask the Premier or the minister: Why did he not adopt this recommendation?

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

S. CROCKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wish the Member opposite would have reached out to the Chair of the PAC in the last 24 hours and gotten her response to what we've done for this industry in the last week.

Mr. Speaker, \$30 million for tourism supports, and we will work with the industry. We will work with the industries, Mr. Speaker, to see how –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, you know they get it so wrong day in and day out. They can't even celebrate what we've been able to do this week for tourism in our province. I was rudely interrupted by the Member for CBS, Mr. Speaker, which is not new. It's been a great week for our industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, again, I hope he's spoken to Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador because they're as excited as I am for what we've done for tourism this week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: I can't afford another supplementary to try to get an answer to the incentive program. I guess it's like the plan, it's somewhere.

The provincial reopening plan made no mention of Marine Atlantic, which is a critical gateway to the rest of the country.

Has the minister had any discussion with his federal cousins about reducing Marine Atlantic fees to stimulate tourism and the movement of essential goods?

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

Sorry, the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly there are a lot of people over here that would be willing to take that question on, but perhaps I'll answer it, given the fact that I've got a history with that entity and it's perhaps the biggest driver in, not only our community but I don't think people realize its importance to the entire province, as you say, for conveyance of passengers and the conveyance of freight.

What I can say is that we have been in touch with the federal minister, Omar Alhabra, to talk about the possibility of getting rates down. We know that there was no increase this year on rates for passengers going forward. In fact, I think they may have suspended the rate increase that had been planned for commercial traffic.

I'm also happy to say that they have just announced a new building for Port aux Basques to put the administrative office there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: On the Member's question, I will say that doesn't mean we stop there. We must continue to press the federal government to ensure that Marine Atlantic's rates are as low as possible and we work on the subsidy recovery.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: The provincial reopening plan also made no mention of air access to the province, another critical gateway for our tourism industry. If tourists can't reach the province, they certainly can't spend money here.

I ask the minister: What is being done to improve air access to the province and when will we see an air access plan?

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

S. CROCKER: Wow. Again, getting it wrong seems to be the theme across, Mr. Speaker. He missed the budget. He must have had a nap during the budget on Monday. It was clearly outlined in the minister's speech.

We've met with HNL. Yesterday afternoon, while most people were having their lunch, I was talking to PAL, Air Canada and WestJet sharing our plan. I can tell you what: They, too, were as excited as I am with that plan.

They will monitor going forward on their bookings. Tourism operators told me this morning that they're getting calls. We know seats are filling up. We have future calls coming with WestJet, Air Canada and PAL and lots of exciting things that are happening.

Again, we outlined in this week's budget that we have a commitment to air access. The challenge with air access will be, first and foremost, re-establishing what we had, and then we're going to go looking for more.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: I must have missed it. My apologies.

I wonder would the minister table the air access plan that I missed to the House?

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

S. CROCKER: The Member opposite, if he was in contact with the stakeholder groups, would know that the air access plan is something that was done by HNL and the airport authorities, Mr. Speaker. It's not my plan to table.

Mr. Speaker, if he wants me to table the budget, I can certainly table it again, because it was clearly outlined on Monday that we have a plan for air access in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This reminds me of the game show *Jeopardy!* where you get an answer and we have to figure out what the question was.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the responsible minister: Do you know how much revenue will be generated from the implementation of a sugar tax?

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

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

I believe in the budget documents – I'm going by memory – it's \$9 million per year. I think that's what the budget documents clearly outline.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also ask the minister: Do you know if the revenue from the sugar tax will simply go into general revenues, or will it be redirected to healthier food choices, such as in schools?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much. I've already answered this question, but I'm happy to do so again, Mr. Speaker.

Taxation revenue goes to the general revenue. It goes to general revenue, but there is program spending that we do in multiple departments to assist with better, healthier eating choices and better, healthier outcomes. I'll use an example, Mr. Speaker: we've given, in this budget, a million dollars to Kids Eat Smart; we've also done a tax credit to encourage physical activity. That's clearly outlined in the budget as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So I take that answer as meaning the full revenue generated from the sugar tax will go totally to Health.

S. COADY: (Inaudible.)

P. DINN: That's what I want to (inaudible).

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

They're clearly having some trouble across the aisle, Mr. Speaker, in understanding the budgeting process, so I'll try it again.

Taxation revenue goes to general revenue and then there are stipends that go, during the budget process, to each of the departments. As you know from Estimates, you'll know what particular department gets which particular funding. As I've just given the answer to, \$1 million, for example, for Kids Eat Smart; I think that is under the Health budget. We have poverty reduction and that's under CSSD. It depends on which program you're talking about as to which department is actually the one responsible for it, but taxation goes to general revenue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I wasn't talking about the taxation; I'm talking about the total funding that we're going to get from this initiative.

Minister: Do you know how much will be saved and how many jobs will be cut by implementing a new integrated corporate services function for the four regional health authorities?

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

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

The back-office functions across the regional health authorities lend themselves to consolidation. Indeed, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port dedicated two years of his life to looking at shared services, particularly on the issue of inventory and stock control.

We, on this side of the House, have not yet decided whether or not that will be limited to the regional health authorities or, indeed, incorporate government entities, in general, or government departments as well. Until those kind of policy decisions are made, the discussion is a bit premature. I'm sure we would be happy to keep you informed as we go.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

I'm glad to hear the minister say on the tourism that he did get some answers and they spoke to the groups involved. Well, that's part of doing your job I guess. With 20 questions, we finally got an answer.

Motor Registration Division is one of the busiest registries and holds a magnitude of personal information.

Minister, do you know if there's been any analysis completed to privatize Motor Registration?

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

S. COADY: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately they got it wrong again. In the budget, we did indicate that we'll be going out to the markets for joint solutions, meaning that we will talk to business, we will talk to unions, we will talk to co-operatives and we'll talk to social enterprises to see if they can provide a better solution to how we actually operate the registries.

I listened yesterday intently to a question by a Member opposite. In the question, he actually said there are challenges with registries. So I'll lay it out there for that again, but that will be the process that we will go through.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Are there plans to extend the – or some form of the sugar-sweetened tax to other forms of food that are sugar sweetened, or what we would call junk food, fast food, that are high in calorie and low in nutrients?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much. A very good question, Mr. Speaker.

We are taking the first step. There are many jurisdictions around the world that do offer the sugar-sweetened beverage tax. We will learn from their experiences, including in the United States; we'll be a leader in Canada.

Whether we go further, Mr. Speaker, we'll do the analysis in the next number of years to see

how the implementation – it doesn't come until April 1, 2022, but then we'll look and see if there are further things we can do.

Again, I do emphasize, Mr. Speaker, there are concerns around the consumption of sugar and we'll be continuing to look at how we can improve the health of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I draw the attention of the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality to page 32 of the Estimates book, section 2.8.02, Women and Gender Equality, line 10, Grants and Subsidies, which if the description is accurate, is for "grants to equality-seeking organizations, including Women's Centres, Regional Coordinating Committees Against Violence and Indigenous Organizations"

Would the minister be able to explain to me why the amount budgeted this year is \$405,000 less than what was budgeted last year?

I have copies here, if people want them, with the highlighted areas.

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly thank my colleague, the hon. Member.

I also am honoured to answer my very first question here in Question Period in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: We certainly had a discussion yesterday. I want to again confirm for the Member and for the House of Assembly that there are absolutely no cuts to the department of Women and Gender Equality.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: As of a matter of fact, the Premier campaigned on this and he came through. Almost \$500,000 was allocated to the department just last year – we see the commitment again – to go to programs, varying-necessity programs, of course, such as the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, which is well needed, as we know, particularly in Labrador.

Again, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake, there are no cuts to this department. Again, we're certainly happy to work – and the Member is always welcome to come to the department; we can collaborate on anything he wants to.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: The Premier refused to be transparent about the work in progress of the Rate Mitigation Team.

I ask: What is the plan for ratepayers if no deal can be reached with the federal Liberal government before the clock runs out?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would contest the preamble of the Member's question. While the question is good, it's not about refusing to be transparent. Obviously, if you're in the middle of a complex negotiation, you're not going to go and show your cards to the public. Absolutely the worst thing you could do is to go and show your hand while you're in the middle of it. That's not what we are going to do.

What I can say, to reiterate the points that have been made by the Premier, is that we have extremely capable and competent people that are actively and furiously engaged in rate mitigation talks in Ottawa. We are committed to this. We do know that there's a timeline. We will continue to do the work that is necessary. We're

confident that we can come forward with a rate mitigation plan for the citizens of this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West for a quick question.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The budget boasts about bold ideas about moving consumers of this province from oil heat to electric heat.

Given the refusal of transparency about the negotiations, are residents supposed to blindly trust that they won't be facing increased costs of living because of this decision?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I reiterate the point that I made: We are not going to go and jeopardize the citizens of this province by laying out the plan. That is absolutely the worst idea that you can do.

The reality is that we have been forced into a tough position because of the Muskrat Falls Project; we are forced to engage in rate mitigation.

I hear some comments from the Members opposite, they're the ones that put us in this mess and what we are trying to do is to get us out of that mess.

Again, I see some heads nodding with us. I'm glad to finally see –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. PARSONS: – that they acknowledge that we are trying to clean up their mess. What we can promise them is that we will leave no stone unturned as we move forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

Enough from both sides.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Coat of Arms Act, Bill 20.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

The background to this petition is as follows: The Witless Bay Line is a significant piece of infrastructure.

WHEREAS many commute outside the Avalon on a daily basis for work as well as for commercial, residential and tourism growth in our region has increased the volume of traffic on this highway;

THEREFORE we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade this significant piece of infrastructure to enhance and improve the flow of traffic to and from the Trans-Canada Highway.

Mr. Speaker, I drive this – I'm not going to say I drive this road regularly but I go in and I drive across it a fair amount. I do thank the government last year for doing four kilometres, but the road is 22 kilometres long. It's about seven or eight kilometres left on the road and to do half of it don't mean anything to the people, the truck drivers and I'm going to say the crab workers driving the trucks as well going to and from the plants distributing crab.

We have an industry in Bay Bulls where the marine terminal is; a proposed one in Fermeuse. We have tourism; they're doing the Irish Loop. There are two people that remind me: one towing campers and the other guys that are driving motorcycles, and cars and vehicles as well. But when they go in there, it's not safe to be driving at times.

I'm not saying the road is totally gone because it's not, but in the areas that you have to drive on the left side of the road, and it's not like a small community road where you're going 30 or 40 kilometres, the speed limit is probably 80 or 90 kilometres. The road needs some work.

I really think that they should go in and drive it. There has been ministers in there and they've looked at it, but, hopefully, they can have that plan to put it in their budget to be able to complete the rest of this road so that we can move on to get to some other business in the district.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to respond to that and say to the Member, thank you for that petition and I'll take it under consideration because I don't want the Opposition House Leader getting upset or anything like that. I want to make note that the hon. Member that just presented the petition, we also had a side conversation about that exact petition so it is not going unnoticed. I just want to thank him for that.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll make sure my House Leader is listening to me.

This petition is for fairer electricity rates for Northern Labrador. I presented it a couple times now, the last sitting I also presented it.

The rates charged to Northern Labrador residents are cost prohibitive using electric heat; therefore, the rates charged are cost prohibitive to adequately heating their homes. The rationale for this petition is to bring electricity rates more in line with what our neighbouring residents of Lake Melville region pay.

Above the ceiling of 1,000 kilowatt hours, Torngat Mountains residents pay six times the rate of Lake Melville residents, jumping up to 18.5 cents a kilowatt hour. The 1,000 kilowatt hour ceiling prevents many residents from being able to afford to heat their homes with electric heat.

Poorly heated houses often result in damage, creating expensive repairs for frozen pipes, moisture damage and mould. Poorly heated houses also create social and mental health issues that can be long lasting. We strongly believe that changes to electricity rates are needed for Northern Labrador residents of Torngat Mountains.

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 increase the lifeline block to 3,500 kilowatt hours.

Now, as I said, I have presented this many times and I actually did get a response from the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The level of chatter is getting a little too loud.

L. EVANS: – Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology last week. I did find his response a little bit disappointing because there's so much value in having the ability to heat your house. In actual fact, in my two most northern communities, a lot of families cannot do that because of the distance to haul wood that has to be chopped up and brought into the house. Long distances are very, very expensive. It's impacting our seniors who don't have the physical ability, it's impacting women who don't have the physical ability and, also, people with disabilities or injuries or health issues.

I was wondering why the Premier wouldn't jump on this opportunity to do some real constructive work towards reconciliation and I asked about that. Is it because they don't want to actually help us because they're looking at all of Labrador's electricity rates?

The Minister of Industry was very honest. He did say, and I'll quote from *Hansard*: "Right now, electricity rates all over this province are being looked at, because we have to grapple with Muskrat Falls coming on stream and the money that we are going to need to mitigate those rates so that everybody in this province – every citizen – is not frozen out of their homes. That's the reality here."

I don't think Labrador, especially my district who were not the end-users for Muskrat Falls – there was a commitment made to us, that if we're not the end-users and we don't use Muskrat Falls's electricity, we will not have to pay (inaudible) Muskrat Falls.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to respond to this as I have done before. Contrary, sometimes, to what – the conversation is about not responding; certainly, this will be the second time that I have responded to this petition. I think just to add upon what I said previously, yes, obviously in Newfoundland and Labrador we are looking at electricity rates across the entire province. A lot of the questions we get every day are on rate mitigation.

We are faced with huge challenges, both in Labrador, rural Newfoundland – everywhere when it comes to electricity, and a lot of that is generated by Muskrat Falls. We are going to need to do some serious work. It's going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars to mitigate the decision that was made before we got here and it's something we grapple with every day.

Now, I will point out that this 1,000 kilowatt-hour monthly lifeline block that was referenced here, the cost of that already right now, I'll say, far exceeds any of the revenue that comes from it. There is generally a revenue shortfall that is already on the go and it's called the rural deficit.

I will point out a couple of facts here because it is something felt by everybody. Having visited the North Coast with my former colleague and having a chance to go around, I absolutely appreciate the challenges that are faced by Labrador. Again, I also appreciate the challenges that are faced all over this province. I will point out that right now when we look at the rural deficit and some of the subsidies – I'll just point to a couple of things: remote domestic diesel rates on the Island average 14.96 cents per kilowatt and Labrador domestic diesel rates average 6.72 cents per kilowatt; Island Interconnected System residential customers pay 13.06 cents per kilowatt and Labrador Interconnected pays 3.38 cents.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I bring forward a petition again today. It's 208 signatures of seniors looking for senior support in Labrador West.

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

WHEREAS the seniors of our province are entitled to peace and comfort in their homes, where they have spent a lifetime contributing to its prosperity and growth; and

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

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to allow seniors in Labrador West to age in place by providing affordable housing options for seniors and assisted-living care facilities –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's getting very difficult to hear the speaker.

J. BROWN: – for those who require care.

Mr. Speaker, like I said last time, seniors in Labrador West – it's a fast-growing population of seniors. These are people who some of them were actually born in Labrador West and have lived there their entire lives. They have children and grandchildren and they want to see their grandchildren grow up.

Like I said before, the big part of it is they want to see their grandchildren grow up in the community that they helped build. They don't want to leave; they don't want to go to a facility

in another community. The nearest community that would have a facility to them is 600 kilometres away in Lake Melville. Or, if that's unavailable, then their next option is Deer Lake or Gander. These individuals don't want to be separated from their family. They want to be able to enjoy their retired years in a community that has their family and their friends surrounding them.

We are in a really interesting place in the history of Labrador West that we actually require seniors care, some level 3 care. We do have a long-term care facility. It does have a few beds but it is not adequate or the correct type of care that some of these people need. We've always had trouble with home care as well. I'm sure the Minister of Health has heard me say it before about the constraints on the home care workers in Labrador West. We have very few but we have a great need for it. So if any home care workers are listening: Come to Labrador West.

Right now, we do need this extra support, we do need to look at a facility, but we also need to look at some kind of housing options for seniors as well. They are living in older homes that do require a lot of work, especially if you're a widow or anything like that. It's hard to maintain a large four-bedroom house as a single individual on a fixed income. We need a whole broad-spectrum look at this.

The seniors in my community have been pushing, they've been asking. They need some assistance and they would really appreciate a close microscopic look at the unique challenges of Labrador West and providing there.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

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

J. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just a quick response to the Member's petition around seniors and seniors' housing. The Member and I have had some early discussions around this and related issues. We, as a province, need to address the issues that are

certainly in both the preamble and the citations in the petition.

One of the things that our agency will be doing, through the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, is to develop a housing and homelessness plan for the next couple of years. The issues that the Member raised will be addressed in that plan. In the meantime, we will be working on any particular issues that pop up which we can address while we're waiting for that plan to be developed.

Thank you, Sir.

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the following petition I'm going to present is – this is the background: There is something wrong with our health care delivery in Newfoundland and Labrador when 90,000 people do not have access to a family doctor, and also cannot see nurse practitioners so they can get timely care, catch problems earlier and avoid worse outcomes, tragic suffering and higher costs.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to make access to family doctors and nurse practitioners an urgent priority, creating a province-wide program of primary health care teams: where patients receive comprehensive care; where family physicians can transition away from solo practice to team practice; where nurse practitioners, registered nurses and other providers can be connected and integrated with family doctors in team structures; where patients can have continuous relationships with their own most responsible provider; where the progress we have made in electronic medical records and virtual care can be harvested for integrated team care; and where the focus can shift to wellness and disease prevention. And also by: reducing the proportion of unattached patients in the province to less than 5 per cent; and retaining 75 per cent of Memorial's medical graduates who pursue family medicine.

Mr. Speaker, that petition could be read for any district in this province, by my guess. Right now, obviously, I'm the Member for CBS, and in CBS it is the single biggest issue facing the residents. There are lots of issues out there, lots of needs; we all get that. The biggest issue in my district right now – and I was asked during the election what it was – was the family doctor shortage. It was one of the main priorities when I went to the doors. I hear it regularly.

I get emails – I don't know how many more Members get them; I get emails almost – I don't get 10; I get dozens a day, but I get them regularly: I can't find a doctor; any suggestion where to find a family doctor? How do I proceed? I can't get a prescription filled; I can't get this done. It's about primary health care. You get that care, that prevents our acute care facilities and our emergency rooms from being built up. That's the problem we're faced with. You go to any emergency room, it's seven, eight, 10 hours. My guess is the majority of those people in there, with that many people without a family doctor, are waiting for something that could be done by a nurse practitioner or their family doctor.

I heard the Minister of Health over there at times say the magic number of 640 doctors is required to service the province. We can't control the working hours, their lifestyles. Things have changed. It's not the way it was years ago when people were doctors working six days a week. People have lives, and I understand the quality of life is everything.

Maybe we need to have 900 doctors to be able to do the work of the 600. It doesn't cost any more if they're only doing half the time. We need bodies on the ground; we need boots on the ground. Does that mean nurse practitioners? Does that mean a mixture of both? Whatever it takes.

Right now, when you call a family doctor in my district, you're lucky to get in in four to five weeks. That's a phone call. Heaven forbid if you need to go in in person. Most times they end up out in emergency rooms.

I think it's a very important issue. It's one that's facing not only my District of Conception Bay South, but the 39 other districts. I call upon

government to give this some serious consideration.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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 Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand to speak on the amendment that was introduced yesterday in the House of Assembly by the Official Opposition. This is the amendment that's usually put in on a regular basis by all Opposition to have another chance to speak on the budget itself, and I will take that opportunity again to speak today on some issues that have been brought to my attention and on behalf of the people of Humber - Bay of Islands.

First of all, I just want to, again, thank the people of Humber - Bay of Islands for their support and for the continued support of all of the residents in Humber - Bay of Islands through their volunteer activities, the town councils and the other activities that are put through on a volunteer basis in Humber - Bay of Islands. A lot of youth groups and I know there is softball over in Gillams, and look at Meadows with the hockey rink in Meadows and the rink in Cox's Cove. There's a lot of volunteer work done in the district and I just want to thank all of the individuals that do that.

Mr. Speaker, again, when I was home last weekend the biggest issue I heard again was with the last election. I went around to a few places last weekend and it was brought to my attention on a number of occasions about the issues of the last election. I know I had a very

frank discussion with the minister yesterday, a very good discussion I had with the minister, and thanks for being upfront and forthright, and that's always respected to have a very frank discussion.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to raise concerns on the issues of the election. The biggest concern I have – and I know my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands put it up – what if we put in the legislation, what if there's a new election act put in place, what if we do it? What if it's the best election act in Canada, what if? But what if we have a Commissioner for Legislative Standards who refuses to follow the act, what happens? What Happens?

P. LANE: Nothing.

E. JOYCE: That's my biggest concern, that we have an Officer of the House of Assembly who is answerable to this House of Assembly, who has the attitude, and through his actions and through the inaction of this House of Assembly and the Management Commission in this House of Assembly that he can do what he like.

He can take votes over the phone – no one else can. The seniors in Humber - Bay of Islands can't do that, but he can. He can walk away with the act. He can hand-deliver ballots, but out in Corner Brook you're not allowed to do that. The DROs out in Corner Brook weren't allowed to hand-deliver ballots, you had to get them put through your mail. But he can take them, walk around and hand them around.

The most glaring thing in the last election, Mr. Speaker, that you find is you see the extension every time; every time there was an extension. I always asked the question – and, of course, I'll be upfront, the dealings I had with the former Premier and the Commissioner for Legislative Standards – what was going on behind the scenes that we don't know about? What was going on behind the scenes? I know full well, in writing, before the former Premier was involved with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, was this Premier involved? Was the Liberal Party involved?

The reason why I question that is I know the past, but the other reason why I question that, the big reason why I question that, if you really

want to represent the people of this province, especially the seniors, a lot of people with disabilities who couldn't vote, when you have a government who just got elected and there's no action taken against an Officer of the House of Assembly who admitted – admitted – taking ballots by phone; admitted delivering ballots, admitted doing it and there's no interaction, I have to question: Why is there no action taken by the government?

There are two reasons: one, they're elected so let's just bury it; two, there's information that if there was ever an investigation done which was asked by this House of Assembly, if there was ever an investigation done there would be information brought out that would be very embarrassing to some people that was associated. I'm convinced. I am convinced because I said before and I –

P. LANE: I am too.

E. JOYCE: What?

P. LANE: I am too.

E. JOYCE: I am convinced because I can assure you, as sure as I'm here, that when the Opposition Party and the NDP asked for a meeting and there was a meeting agreed, and then all of a sudden a letter from this guy, whoever is with the Liberal Party, he says, they shouldn't meet; there's no meeting, there's something going on. There is something going on.

Why an Officer of the House of Assembly, when you have seniors holding up to a window their driver's licence and have someone with an extension rod, clicking the camera and we don't think there's anything wrong with that. Where seniors even come to my door, coming to my door with their information asking me to get a ballot filled out because they don't have a computer, and we're just going to brush that under because the Liberals won the majority and we're scared what we might find out. We're scared what we might find out. It's appalling actually. It's actually appalling.

I'll tell you a story about that, Mr. Speaker. We sent in about 150 or 170 ballots by fax. People never got it. The day before, I started calling and

I'll admit I gave their direct number to the Chief Electoral Officer. I gave the direct number; people started calling. Do you know what happened when people started calling directly? The day before it was suppose to be finished, do you know what they said? Oh my God, that's on the desk here. I don't know why that wasn't processed.

All of a sudden, oh my God, someone got it. They just called me; the ballot is on the way. Well, the deadline is tomorrow. The next thing, you know what happens? The extension is made again because there were 150 to 175 ballots found on someone's desk sitting there, that for a week to 10 days I was trying to get – where are they? How come?

I finally wrote Bruce Chaulk. I have the email –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the Member not to (inaudible).

E. JOYCE: The Commissioner for Legislative Standards. Sorry.

I wrote the Commissioner for Legislative Standards and said here's where they were faxed from, here's where they were faxed to, here's the date and here's the confirmation. All of a sudden, boom, they all started receiving them the next couple of days. That night, 9:30, 10 at night, people were getting calls at home saying we just found your information; we're going to start sending out your ballots. Everybody in this room can tell me that's proper? That's fair?

I don't care. If the Commissioner for Legislative Standards can come in and justify everything that was done, that it was proper, there was no interference with it – he made mistakes with it – let's take it and move on. But until we, as a Legislature, do call in the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to find out why he was allowed to deliver ballots, yet back home the DROs weren't allowed to do it – they're not allowed to do it unless they get an official request for it. They're not allowed.

We can't even go into a seniors' home and say there's a senior who wants a ballot. No, not allowed. That senior has to call in to get that person to come to their home. But the

Commissioner for Legislative Standards can walk around to a few of his friends or his buddies, he said, and all of a sudden, protect himself I would say – protect himself if this ever came up in the House. Those people who received the ballots can't talk about it because you received a ballot; you compromised yourself. Smart guy – a very smart guy.

This is my last point on this. I will never give up on it because I've seen the look in the seniors' faces; I've seen the anguish. If we, as legislators, Members who have a fiduciary duty to hold the government accountable, do not get the Commissioner for Legislative Standards in this room so we can ask him questions, so we can get to the bottom of this or have an independent investigation done outside, we are not doing our duties; we are failing. I always said, if you're going to fail on something that's so important as a vote, what else are you failing on and what else do we need?

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General here could do a report on anybody, any department? We're allowed to get that person or entity in front of the Public Accounts, but we can't get the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. There's something wrong.

P. LANE: Who reports to us.

E. JOYCE: Who reports to this House.

If we can't have him in front of the Public Accounts, the government is not going to allow him to come to the House of Assembly, so what happens? The seniors that turned around and couldn't vote, the ones who never received ballots, the ones who had to hold their driver's licences up, the ones who came to my door – and I'm sure everybody in this Legislature went through the same thing trying to help people out, to fill out ballots and try to get their ballots in. If we don't get answers for all those people there, we are failing.

I can tell this government, and make no bones about it; it shows lack of courage to get to the truth, whatever it is. It may not change the outcome, because I don't think anybody wants to go through another election right now, but it does show lack of courage by this government when they will not get to the truth and to the

bottom. If everything can be justified and if there was no inside dealing or backroom dealing with the Liberal executive, with the co-chairs of the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador or the Premier of this province, then let's accept it, but at least we have to get the answers.

If we don't get the answers, we are failing. The seniors that we had to try to get ballots for, the ones who never got it and the ones who couldn't even register in the first place, Mr. Speaker, we should stand up and apologize to them because we did not follow through on the people who died in wars so we can vote. We're letting this happen.

Honestly, I stand so strong on this here. If we can prove that there was absolutely no fault to why the Commissioner for Legislative Standards can deliver ballots, but they can't do it in Corner Brook, why you can accept some over the phone and no one else can – there's a rumour people went up to the office the last day and voted at the office – why there are so many ballots not even sent out –

P. LANE: The scrutineers.

E. JOYCE: Why the scrutineers weren't even allowed to – just to let you know, and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands brought it up, I was the one who demanded. Until I demanded in emails that we were allowed to have a scrutineer and he was breaking the act, that's when he finally said: Okay, we'll do it remotely. The only thing you could see was the actual rejected ballots. You could not see – it is right in the act. It is in the act that you could look at every ballot. If you go on election day, where you're a scrutineer, every ballot is taken up and shown: Here, everybody agree? Put it in the pile. That's in the act.

Canada goes around this world and trains people to do that. They actually train people how to run an election. They train people, yet here in Newfoundland and Labrador the Commissioner for Legislative Standards can break that act. I'm not saying there is anything wrong with what they did, but I can tell you they broke the act. The minute you break the act you should be accountable to this House of Assembly.

I heard from the Commissioner talking about, well, b'y, it was a pandemic election. I asked one question and I asked this in writing. I put this in writing to him. How many of us had Zoom meetings? How many of us saw documents with Zoom meetings? What's wrong with having a Zoom with the scrutineers and holding the ballots up to the camera? It's done everywhere; we're doing it now. We're doing it remotely as we speak right now, but for some reason the Commissioner for Legislative Standards has taken it upon his own initiative to say it's a pandemic, I'm allowed to break the rules.

That's why I say to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, I'm sure there is going to be great legislation coming in to change the Elections Act. I'm sure of that. There is no doubt; I think the Opposition and the independents will ensure there will be great legislation. What is the safeguard? If we don't hold the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, who did not follow the legislation – what is going to be in it that is going to be different that it can't happen again? That is the question I'd like to ask. Why aren't we, as legislators, holding him accountable for it? If we don't do it – and I'll say it in my last word on that – I can tell every parliamentarian that's in this House of Assembly, we are not doing our fiduciary responsibility of holding Officers of this House of Assembly accountable.

I ask one more question: What if we knew – and this is just hypothetical, very hypothetical; I'm just using this as an example. What if we knew an Officer of the House of Assembly broke the law and stole \$5,000? What would happen? They'd be gone through the door. There'd be a motion in this House the next morning.

What is the difference of taking away someone's right to vote, which people died for, and we're not dealing with it? It's going to be a black mark on this Legislature and this Assembly and the Members in this House if we don't get to the bottom of it. If the Commissioner comes in here and he can explain and give all the information, what happened, and explains, that's fine, let's all just stand up and say okay. But until that's done, until the person can say why he broke the act and why he thinks he had the authority to break the act, we are not doing our duty as legislators. I, for one, every opportunity I get I'll speak

about that, and I will have lots of opportunities, I can assure you.

I know I'm not on the Committee, and I understand that. Me and the minister had a great chat about that and I thank the minister for that. I accept that, not a problem. Not a problem. No issue with that whatsoever. But I can assure you, I've been in this Legislature for a long, long time, when there's something that concerns the people of Humber - Bay of Islands, and they were so sincere and hurt, I will bring it up. I am ashamed, like I told the people, I am ashamed to be a part of a Legislature that will not hold an Officer of the House of Assembly accountable. It is shameful.

I take responsibility because somewhere along the line I am part of this Legislature. We hear the minister saying let the courts take care of it. I can tell the minister that that's the legal part of it. But I can tell you the person knocking on my door with his information for his wife who can't get out of the House will not be solved in court. The only way that's going to be resolved is in this House of Assembly. If we don't do that we're failing those people and we are failing the right to vote. What's going to stop it the next time?

We stand up hear, and I hear people talking about thanking – and we all should – our veterans for the service so we can vote. What would our veterans think if they knew that we had people, seniors, who supported them in the Second World War and the First World War and the Korean War and other things – a lot of their relatives – found out that their siblings, their grandkids could not vote because there are irregularities in the Elections Act that weren't followed; that this election was not given proper care, was not given proper due care by the government at the time, by the Chief Electoral Officer at the time and they couldn't vote and they were begging to vote? What would they say? Do you know what they would say? They would come in here and they would let us know what they really think. Because I can assure you that they would not stand for it – they would not stand for it.

I'll close on that, Mr. Speaker. I'll have an opportunity in Petitions to speak about this part again. I know this is a budget debate and I know

this is an amendment to the budget. Mr. Speaker, usually when there's a budget you can speak to any issue that's pertaining to your district. One of the biggest issues that I hear on the regular basis, and still hear it – and I'm not complaining because I happened to win and I'm here. Win or lose; I've won more times, I've lost before in sports and I lost in politics. Winning or losing is not the point. The point is when you leave, can you leave and say you did the best that you could do.?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: My last words to the government: You won the election, why are you so afraid to have an independent body who will bring the Commissioner for Legislative Standards in this House of Assembly so we can get to the bottom of this and so we can go back to the siblings of veterans, who died in the war, and say: Here's what happened, but here's what we're going to do to make sure it doesn't happen again? Until we do that, we're failing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador on the most democratic right and that is to vote.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

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

I'm very proud to be able to speak to this budget and to the amendment that's before us today.

Before I start – well, I guess I'm starting – but I would like to draw attention to all the Member in this House of Assembly. Many of you have probably received an email or a message from a lady named Rosalie Belbin out of Red Bay, and I promised her today that I would start my speech: Hello, Rosalie, to you.

For those of you who have been very lucky to visit her, I would encourage others to do it. I

drove down the other day with my wife and my dog Kracker, it was a good eight-hour drive and we stopped into Rosalie's. There is a shrine to you, all of you. There are little photos there, there are messages and probably the one that you all need to beat is a bobble head that Mr. Ches Crosbie gave her that sits on her counter. The Member for St. George's - Humber, his photo is there, and there are other memorabilia.

I would encourage you to try to up the ante and see what you can do to get to the front of her shrine to all of us, because she is watching there. She is a dedicated follower of this House of Assembly. You got to support your fans. I put that out there, Rosalie, to you.

I will now turn to something I think that has captivated, in a very sombre way, myself and I think everyone in this House and I think right across the country, that's the revelation of the sudden discovery of 215 young lives in a mass grave next to a residential school in Kamloops, BC. I think we just have to try to grapple how can this happen in our country. What could people have possibly been thinking, with the basis and the times and the things that we deal with now, our own sense of values? That shock has certainly – you can feel it, you can see it. I think it's up to all of us to see what we can do to make sure that such an incident, not only never happens again but that we do something to try to address the pain and the sorrow that so many people have felt.

One thing that I've heard from many wise people – my background is environmental sciences and we often talk about sustainable development and I'm always trying to explain that. Many years ago, somebody pointed out to me that – this is from an Indigenous perspective or analogy – I found it was probably the best definition of sustainable development when they said to me: When you make a decision you have to think seven generations out. You'll often hear this. Carolyn Bennett says this a lot, I notice, in her commentary in her role as a federal minister.

I think if we just think about where we were 100 years ago when these residential school systems and up to, frankly, not that long ago, the shocking implications of generation after generation after generation, and you hear these terms intergenerational trauma. I know myself in

my years in Labrador, and when I first started meeting and speaking and hearing stories from people, it ranged. It ranged from people who found it such a traumatic experience they couldn't even speak about it.

For others it was less arduous and it was certainly something that they found difficult, you can imagine; you can't imagine any of us leaving our homes, leaving our families at a very young age, some of them three, four, five years of age, and went off to school in our situation, for example, one that I know well is the one in Northwest River. A lot of children from the Coast came there. For some it was a good experience, for others it was very difficult, but for all of them it was a traumatic separation from their parents and their families. We really need to figure and find our way through this. I hope we can find the strength and give it the attention it really deserves.

Given we're speaking about a budget amendment, I did want to talk a little bit about the budget. I'm going to step back on the budget a little bit, and I commend the government at least – I'm hearing this overture – they're going to move, with legislation, to work towards a balanced budget.

I just draw reference to an analogy that I'm very – it's not an analogy, it's just a good comparison. Here's a statement from March 9, 2021, from the Nunatsiavut Government, and here's their opening line: "The Nunatsiavut Government's 2021-22 balanced budget, delivered today during the first-ever virtual sitting of the Nunatsiavut Assembly" Key word: balanced, right off the bat. I feel it's very good, it's going to be important that we reach and achieve this idea of a balanced budget. Because, frankly, thinking again, seven generations out, why are we racking up a deficit now that our children and their children and so on are going to have to deal with? Frankly, that's what we are faced with.

I think we would all argue that we currently have a spending problem. I would put it out there that I would suggest it's really an historic spending problem. It's been the inability or the lack of attention, or that short four-year, or even less, mandate that we're all under. We have to start thinking longer term. We have to start

thinking about these determinations and these decisions and what it means for those to come.

I remember when I sat in Cabinet, which I enjoyed very much, I just imagine that very first budget in 2016 and when the, then, Finance minister came and explained to us what each of us needed to do and the serious cuts that were required, the drastic action that was needed to just hold off those who were looking for their money.

At that time, I think, our interest payments were something like 10.5, almost 11 per cent. Well, we're just marginally higher than that now; still struggling with it being the second line item in our budget. It comes before Education; all that we do to educate our children, ourselves, as we go on to secondary or post-secondary education. We have this deficit payment dealing right smack in front of us, and as we've come to learn through Dame Moya Greene, it's much worse than we even imagined.

Another criticism I have on the budget, and I guess what I'm alluding to, is it would be nice to see a balanced budget; the sooner we get there, the better. There is going to be pain and we're just going to have to realize, again, why we're doing this. We have to take the politics out of it, we have to take our own personal survival out of this. We have to recognize where we are in history and we have to support this province as it goes forward and everyone else who will occupy it in the years to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. TRIMPER: I'm always looking at words and how people write things. I would love to get my hands on whoever writes our Budget Speeches. I know the Finance Minister does a great job speaking to it, but just think about all the questions that all of us have received since Monday at 2 o'clock. It's relating to confusion around the numbers that we're hearing. I have it in front of me, several examples, and I'm just going to grab one – one that I'm very appreciative of, by the way.

Just a little side story: Back in 2007, there was a very serious recommendation put before government, at the time, that there was needed to have a facility to provide mental health

services in Labrador, recognizing the challenge. That was 2007. The person who wrote that contacted me a couple of nights ago – it was a really nice message – and sent me their quote from 2007 with that recommendation. I put a little Post-it the other day, because last Saturday we finally started pouring concrete on the new six-bed mental health wing. It's going to be culturally, and from an Indigenous perspective, designed and incorporated with a lot of themes that I feel would really be a great start.

He was recognizing that and he said: Wow, 14 years later, there we are. Well, I looked at these – I guess they're little key messages and so on, and then I look at the Budget Speech. It draws reference to, this year, that there's going to be "\$4.8 million spent for the completion of the new mental health unit in Happy Valley-Goose Bay" All great, but I have to tell you how many people contacted me to say: Is this something new? What is this? I thought we were already building something.

I would like to see us organize this whole budget from – and, again, I recognize the \$4.8 million; this is what was committed to last year in the budget when it was started. What we should be saying is: As part of the ongoing construction, \$4.8 million is going to be allocated this year. What I'm trying to do is say: Let's carry on and support all of those good things that are happening, but if there's some new initiative, let's put that in there; let's put in a cap. box or something. If I didn't have six years of experience in this, I would be finding myself going to each one of these items and saying: Is this new? What does that mean? I can only imagine what some of the new Members are trying to go through as you sort this out.

I was very lucky on Monday, as part of the lockdown, to have two members from the Minister's staff, which were invaluable for me. It was the best two hours I've spent this week with them, because they were able to help clarify so much of what I was reading. I would urge that in future budgets, let's separate out: Here's something new, sugar tax; here's something that is part of what we promised over the last year or two. We're just telling you now: We're carrying on with that.

I have many other examples, but I feel that would be a good way for us to help take away a lot of the confusion. We could just focus on: Where is this government going? What's the new policy shifts? Where are they allocating the money? I think that would be a great help.

I did want to mention – I brought up a couple of the items this morning in Estimates – and I'm using the word nimbleness: We've got to be quick. Look at how this jurisdiction, how the world responded to a COVID-19 pandemic. Within weeks we had shutdown, we had locked down; we had shifted to number one priority: make everyone safe. If we could only find that same kind of nimbleness and quick reflex to be able to respond to other situations that come upon us.

I'm just going to put out an example, I raised it this morning with the minister and we had a good discussion with it, but I'd like to bring it broader here to the floor.

Has anybody tried to go and buy a two-by-four lately? You might have noticed that the price of a two-by-four or plywood sheets, these things have tripled, quadrupled in price. I think a sheet of plywood now is running about \$100. It is up about four times what it was last year.

Look to what's going on in Alberta. Alberta has just shifted itself – it has a structure where it has its own Crown lands and they just changed legislation to allow a doubling of their stumpage and their royalty rates. That's the amount of money that the Crown is paid or someone who owns those trees, that are going to go into wood products, that they would actually be able to recover.

The markup that we're seeing is not at the stumpage or the royalty rate. So whoever owns the trees, whoever cuts the trees is not making the money. The bottleneck is in the processing, it is in that secondary facility aspect of the whole process before the retailer buys that two-by-four or that sheet of plywood.

Why can't we follow Alberta's lead? They just doubled their stumpage rates so they're making a nice windfall now with the high building material prices. It is not affecting what the retailer pays because if you look at some of the

examples, and I sent it to my colleagues in Opposition and to the minister this morning, out of Alberta a lot of these factories and so on, their profits are through the roof. What they're finding is that because of supply and demand, the fees are way up but their commodities that are going into that process line are still very low, relatively. They could easily absorb it. Our own wood products, we are underselling them.

It was raised this morning, it was suggested that maybe we should lower them. In fact, that's not where the problem is. The problem is in the factories, so many of them are shutdown, they're getting back in gear and – anyway, I see it as an opportunity.

One the other day I brought up about Nalcor, myself and my colleague from Labrador West had what we call the height-of-land summit the other day. I would invite everyone in this room, if you've not ever been to Churchill Falls to please go. I thank Nalcor Energy very much for hosting us. Both the Labrador West MHA and myself spent a good day and a half exploring a whole bunch of ideas. We both have a lot of experience in that facility. Some 23 years ago, I was working on an earlier version of the Lower Churchill Project when we looked at the idea of putting – get this – not Gull Island in place, but extra turbines at the powerhouse.

That capability, that opportunity, is still sitting there; a heck of a lot riskier than getting into perhaps another hydroelectric project like Gull Island. It's essentially drilling in the rock in that powerhouse granite; again, another opportunity for revenue. I'm not hearing a lot of discussion about it but I did want to put it out there. I asked the officials about it when we were in Churchill Falls just two weeks ago. They confirmed that opportunity is certainly there. There are some other ways and so on that could be meant and done to generate additional revenues, and I think we should take a serious look at it. That's the kind of nimbleness that I feel we need to talk about.

I wanted to go over to health care and this idea of regional health authorities from the PERT from Dame Moya Greene. I thank those who expedited an opportunity to sit and chat with her for about an hour and a half a few weeks ago. I found that very helpful. I also found it very

insightful. I see the PERT report, frankly, as a smorgasbord of ideas, but I would also suggest that given the time, given who they are and so on, it's clear to say – and as my colleague from St. John's Centre has pointed out – there are inaccuracies in that document.

We all have to be careful as we read it to say, okay, that's an idea, but before we go any further, we better do some careful analysis. Let's not let some idea get the traction that it may or may not deserve until we're sure of exactly what is there. They didn't have years to put this together. They were a bunch of folks, frankly, who were mostly outside of government relying on people to provide them information in some cases that was out of date, as was pointed out.

Back where I was going with health care services, which I'm very concerned about and I think we all are. Face it, if you're running a constituency office, that's occupying a lot of your time, trying to help people, guide them through and trying to make sure that vacancies for specialist positions are being filled, that people can have access to the care they need to literally save their lives, to make sure that they're going to be okay. We have a myriad of issues right now in Labrador that are just so frustrating and so challenging.

I saw some reference in the budget to some new monies for MTAP. I'm not sure if it's changes to the program; I'm not sure if it's additional monies that will help those who need to travel for those services. The officials in the room didn't think that was the case, but I guess we'll see when more details come out. We have a number of serious vacancies, which are causing great hardship. I thank the co-operation I am getting from Labrador-Grenfell Health, from the senior team, in working through them.

I just want to list some of the key problems. No one has a solution right now, but I just want to share with you some of the challenges we have. We just had, unfortunately, our pediatric psychiatrist leave. It was a position that was never based there, but we had a person who was providing that service. I have many families who are in great hardship right now. The authorities are working on it, but I'm just hoping that we can find a solution and a resolution soon, because mental health, as we know, is a great

problem. Unfortunately, for children, we don't have a lot of people who are specializing in that particular aspect and parents are very terrified of what that might mean.

We don't have an ability for children to even go to a dentist in Labrador; we have to fly them out. Ophthalmology service is another one that's just so frustrating. I find to see the cost the government incurs for somebody to have to fly out to St. John's or Corner Brook for, often, a procedure that is in the vicinity of 10 to 15 minutes in duration, and the thousands of dollars that we pay through MTAP – that the people themselves have to pay, approximately, some of them, as often as every month and a half – it's just, oh, my gosh.

Why can't we get a specialist to locations in Labrador? We're having so many people travel. I've spoken about this before, but one period of time I kept track and one-third of the MTAP files we were handling were for people going out for this 10- to 15-minute procedure alone; thousands and thousands of dollars. How much would it have cost to bring that specialist in and just have them provide that service?

I have to underline nurses. I listened to a discussion this morning about the number of schools that are involved in providing training for nurses and so on. If we can find a more efficient way to do that, I welcome it. Our nurses are overworked. We have so many that we need and I think we should really think about how we can make better use of them. I'm seeing great movement in that. I know the Health Minister very well. I've listened to his plans and ideas and I'm just going to do whatever I can to encourage him. But I just want to underline, in this time that I have, just how serious this is. It is literally life and death and we need to figure this out.

I guess I'm just going to summarize: I still see these four crises before us. There are lessons that we are learning from the pandemic. I feel our province is not lucky. We've actually done a great job; luck had nothing to do with it. We had a great team in place. We all came together. We all rallied together. That was an all-party Committee like no other that supported each other.

The demographic challenge – I heard it referenced a few minutes ago – is a big one for us; our fiscal challenge is what we're certainly talking about. Then I go to the big kahuna, climate change, and what this means for all of us. Again, thinking seven generations out, I want to make sure that people will look back at the 50th General Assembly and say thank God they started really doing some good action there and showed some leadership.

Thank you.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's indeed a privilege for me to speak today in this hon. House as I represent the residents of the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. This is the first time I've had the chance to speak here on *Budget 2021*.

Before I begin, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize this week, being May 30 to June 6, as being Early Childhood Educators' Week for 2021. We salute the early childhood educators and child care providers across our province. I am doing that especially in my district. They certainly have an important role in the development of our children. They certainly set forward the foundation for lifelong learning and to enable them to grow and to become happy, healthy and productive members of our communities. As 40 MHAs sitting in this hon. House, that's who we want to work with, those types of people in our communities.

I want to take a quote from the hon. Minister of Finance; it's from her *Budget 2021*. It says: "Healthy, sustainable communities are essential building blocks for Newfoundland and Labrador." It's from the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board. I'd just like to build on that, if I could. I know that all the children throughout our province are those essential building blocks. I know that we all agree with that and support our children. Of course, it just gives more weight to the role that early childhood educators and child care providers do play throughout our whole province.

This morning, I had the privilege of visiting one of those daycares: Busy Bees daycare, a family home daycare in the Town of Torbay, run by Ms. Erica Corcoran, who is the owner-operator, but also a board member of the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador. I had the opportunity to meet outside under a safe, social-distanced visit with the children in her care. They were excited to see Joedy show up to have a conversation. One of the children lives next door to my parents and even asked – he’s at the age of two – how’s Uncle Bob?

It’s great to know that you have that connection with the children in the area, especially with the child care providers. I’ll be continuing to visit other places in my district over the next couple of days.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. I don’t have as many towns in my district as my colleagues from Bonavista or from Stephenville - Port au Port. I have five towns in my district, with approximately 14,300 constituents. I can certainly tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have an awesome district, and I’m not afraid to say it. We have five towns – Pouch Cove, Flatrock, Torbay, Bauline and Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove – in my district. They are growing communities, Mr. Speaker, in need of upgraded infrastructure when we’re coming to looking at municipalities.

That’s why I was glad to see in *Budget 2021*, under Stronger Communities and Municipalities – and, of course, being a former mayor, having that municipal background certainly gives you a different lens of looking at things. I do appreciate what was put in the budget for municipalities – “\$7 million dollars under the Municipal Capital Works Program over three years to support projects that prioritize water, wastewater, disaster mitigation, and regional collaboration.”

I realize the importance of that, Mr. Speaker. When I became mayor in 2013, our first issue that we tackled head on was our clean drinking water. I’m very proud to say that under two governments, we were very successful in completing the water-filtration project in our town, which now services approximately 72 per

cent of the residents with clean, filtered drinking water. It was started under this type of funding, and it’s very important to have that there to support. It doesn’t the project; it supports the project; it starts it off. You do your testing. You do what’s needed to be required in order to move the project forward. I appreciate that that is there in the budget.

Of course, the other \$70 million for community infrastructure over three years under the Canada Infrastructure Program, the multi-year funding of \$70 million and the \$147 million under the Canada Community-Building Fund, which is, of course, the gas tax program: All of these are essential for municipalities to survive.

I know that I have lots of colleagues here who have municipal backgrounds and they would agree with me, the importance of this, relating to municipalities. I’m glad to see that it’s in the budget. I do applaud the minister for that. Of course, being a former mayor, we’d love to see more. Of course, everyone would love to see that; however, I do understand the parameters we’re working under, but I do appreciate that it is there in the budget for municipalities to make them stronger, to make them more vibrant and, of course, for the benefit of all the residents, so I do applaud that.

In my district, Mr. Speaker, I have five schools: Cape St. Francis Elementary in Pouch Cove, Holy Trinity Elementary, Juniper Ridge Intermediate, Holy Trinity High in Torbay and in Logy Bay -Middle Cove-Outer Cove I have St. Francis of Assisi. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, I’ve served on school council in the past, over five years and I know that we have strong school communities. I know we have strong school councils. We do have wonderful volunteers that enable our children to have great school experiences.

I’ll go back to the hon. minister’s *Budget 2021*. The line that I appreciated seeing in the speech was: During this work – and the work would be, of course, to reinvest in the classroom to take “the appropriate steps to integrate the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District into the Department of Education.” The line I liked to see was: “... we will closely communicate with the school communities

throughout the province.” That’s important, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, I served on school council for over five years. I know the school council volunteers that are on the committees of my five schools in my district. That’s important, they want to be included in the conversation.

Again, I thank the hon. minister for putting that forward. It’s sobering to see the bar graph there as well with respect to the number of students and the level of investment. It’s important for me. To be honest, it’s an evening conversation at my dinner table. My wife, Tina, is a kindergarten teacher at Cape St. Francis Elementary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you.

I do know the challenges that come with teaching, but I also know the rewards. They are to be supported and to be commended especially during this pandemic with what they’re going through. But I’m glad to see that investment is there for schools and I look forward to the Minister of Education, as well, rolling out that plan to see how this is going to operate. Of course, we have the best targets in mind, which are the staff and, of course, the children for their better education.

Mr. Speaker, Route 20 runs through my district, as we all know. I would encourage anyone that’s here to take a drive through my beautiful district. All municipalities in my district, Mr. Speaker, do need upgrades to the roadwork and to the infrastructure.

I would like to take this moment to thank the former Member, Mr. Parsons, for the work that he’s done over the last 12½ years. I do want to acknowledge that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: There is work that is going to be done this year that was, of course, by his work is going to be completed this year. We do appreciate it and the residents are looking forward to the work beginning. Some of it has begun so I would thank the hon. Minister of

Transportation and Infrastructure for the preliminary work that has been started.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do have 138 kilometres of town responsibility roads in my district as well. As I said, my district is well travelled. There is a lot of vehicular transport coming through my municipalities of the five towns and the roads are well used, no doubt about it. We have to keep that in mind with respect to the responsibility that the towns do have for the upgrade of that 138 kilometres of road.

I have spoken with all of the councils in my district. I have met with all the councils, my constituent assistant and I, to open that dialogue. I know each one of them, I know the staff in the towns, which are great under my municipal background and that bodes well to have a good working relationship at this level, and as I said when I first spoke in the House, to work with all hon. Members to move forwards the needs of my district so I will continue that, Mr. Speaker.

I was glad to hear the hon. minister speak about tourism, when he spoke several times this week about tourism. My district, being close to the City of St. John’s and to amenities that are there, we don’t have the level of tourism that we do have in other districts, but I can tell you we do have one gem of a draw in our district and that is the East Coast Trail.

Out of the total of 336 kilometres of East Coast Trail in our province, 67 are in my district. I can tell you, again from my former municipal career, I’ve had the opportunity of speaking with hundreds of people across the province and around the world who walk the East Coast Trail in my district. The response that I was given was there was no finer scenery in the world.

It is certainly being missed right now with the pandemic, every municipality throughout the province, every province in the country is dealing with that, Mr. Speaker, as we all know. I would encourage everyone who has the opportunity to take a moment to walk the East Coast Trail, to come to my district to view the beautiful scenery we have and the shoreline.

Again, I should mention – I’d be remiss if I didn’t – the five towns in my district all have MOUs signed with the East Coast Trail

Association. Each town provides either monetary or in-kind service to the East Coast Trail Association. When needed, if there's a flood or if there's snow damage or what have you, the towns do work with the East Coast Trail committee members to ensure that the East Coast Trail is safe and that it's open for people to use. I just want to put that there. I'm very proud of the five municipalities having those MOUs signed with the East Trail Association as well.

Mr. Speaker, we touched on seniors and aging. I have to say, I attended Estimates last night with my colleague from Placentia West - Bellevue. I'm not sure if the minister is here or not. Yes, he is. I said this to him last night, so I'm not trying to swell his head today, but I have to say it was very encouraging to sit in Estimates last evening as a new MHA, and the reply I got from the hon. minister was: and as a new minister. It was encouraging to be in Estimates last evening to hear what the minister had to say with respect to his department and seniors. I think there's a budget line item of just over a million dollars for Grants and Subsidies for seniors, which, of course, we all know is well needed.

To have the level of commitment and the level of engagement from the minister, I have to say, was very encouraging. I applauded him last night for that and I have to say I applaud him again today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Mr. Speaker, I will give credit where credit is due. I shall give credit where credit is due. I'm not afraid to do that. I thank them again for that last night.

Of course, every municipality, every district has seniors. As the former Member had before, I have a soft spot for my seniors as well. I'll do what I can when I can for them, the most vulnerable of our society who make up a large demographic of each and every district here in this hon. House. I do applaud the amount that's there for seniors and from the CSSD Department. I do look forward to working with the minister on anything that comes forward from my district with respect to seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't take a page from my colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans yesterday when he spoke on rotational workers. I do know that each and every district has many rotational workers in their areas, but I'll tell you, I've spoken with many hard-working men and women throughout my district who work across this country, who work around this world; I've spoken to them during the election and I've spoken to them since. We have to support them. They're supporting our province with their tax dollars, with their spending.

It's encouraging to see their resilience. We all know the difficult time that those rotational workers went through. While at the doors, I thanked them personally and I would like to do that here now, on record, to thank the rotational workers and their families. It's a difficult time, no doubt about it.

I've had the privilege, Mr. Speaker, of never having to leave this beautiful province. I've been here for my entire working career and so has my wife. So I don't have that experience of working away and having to come back and forth, but I do know that I've had family members in that category. My brother, Raymond, works out in Fort McMurray; he's been doing so for almost 20 years. I see how taxing it is on him, personally, and I see how taxing it is on his wife and two children. You would think that as the years go by it would get easier, but it isn't; it's getting harder each year.

We have to remember all of the rotational workers in our districts, to applaud them, and for the families, the sacrifice that they are making with respect to their mothers, their fathers, their brothers and sisters who are working away. So we remember the rotational workers. When you have the opportunity to have a chat with them at the Tim Hortons or Sobeys or wherever you're to, have the opportunity to say thank you. Thank them for what they're doing and, of course, for supporting our province as well.

Mr. Speaker, being a former municipal leader and working closely with the volunteer groups in my Town of Pouch Cove, at the time – and now, of course, I'm working with the volunteer groups in my district – I want to touch on volunteer emergency responders and the

important role they play with respect to the operations of each municipality.

Province wide there are approximately 295 departments and roughly 6,500 volunteers for emergency response. Now, I sat in Estimates with the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety. I was a little disappointed to know that there was \$300,000 cut from the Grants and Subsidies for Fire Protection, from \$3 million to \$2.7 million. I realize the importance of that \$300,000, because that could be the make or break for departments in several districts, no doubt about it. I understand, again – as I said about the Finance Minister earlier – the parameters we're under, I do, but I was disappointed to see that there was a \$300,000 cut.

Over the last year or so I've had the – and, please, correct me if I'm wrong.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. WALL: Yes, thank you.

I've had the opportunity, over the last year and a half or so, to travel across the province, my wife and I. When we went to different areas, we made a point of dropping in to the fire halls; we made a point of looking at the infrastructure that's there. It is concerning, no doubt about it. Aging infrastructure in our emergency response: That's something that we all have to grapple with, no doubt.

I will say that I'm very proud of the emergency response in my district. The Pouch Cove Volunteer Fire Department, of course, have an annual budget of roughly \$200,000 from the Town of Pouch Cove. The Torbay Volunteer Fire Department, funded by the Town of Torbay, has an annual budget of \$561,000. It's encouraging to know that the municipalities do –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. WALL: I appreciate it. If I'm wrong – I hope I'm wrong, Minister.

I do appreciate the level of commitment that both municipalities, Pouch Cove and Torbay, have for their fire departments. They see the importance of updated equipment and

infrastructure. They also notice the importance and realize the importance of training that's involved, and mandatory training, I might say, with respect to offensive and defensive firefighting. So we have to be mindful of that.

We certainly applaud our emergency response volunteers. They're on call 24-7 and I can speak to that personally. My son, Zach, is 22 years old. He's been a member of the Pouch Cove Volunteer Fire Department for the last six years; he started at a very young age. He has his five-year pin, which I'm very proud of; he's working on his sixth year. I've been awake at 2 in the morning when the pager goes off for a structure fire or a car accident or a Code 4 medical call. I might add, as well, both departments are certified by Eastern Health to answer Code 4 medical calls, which does speed up the time for such a call in our area.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is winding down. I could say so much more. I do thank – and I'm looking forward to that response, Madam Minister. But I do appreciate from my shadow Cabinet, with respect to what's there for my district. I do look forward to working with, of course, both sides of the House for the betterment of the constituents of Cape St. Francis.

It's certainly a pleasure for me; it's an honour. I appreciate the vote of confidence that the residents have put in me. I look forward to speaking again pretty soon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to have a second opportunity now to speak to the budget. Before I get to the budget, there are a couple of issues I just want to raise very quickly. First one, I just want to say to my colleague in Humber - Bay of Islands, I could spend my 20 minutes as he did but I'll just simply say: Ditto. I agree with everything he had to say about the election and our failure in this House of Assembly to act upon the travesty that

took place. He is right, he is absolutely right, and for me one could be somewhat cynical and say: Well, the Member's had issues with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. I've had no issues with him and I still have no issue with him. Nothing personal, no issue here with me whatsoever, but right is right and wrong is wrong.

Everybody knows on both sides of this House, whether we want to admit it or not, that there was big-time issues in this last provincial election. Things were not done properly, the Commissioner even admitted so himself, publicly, on one issue for sure. It should be investigated. I understand there are court cases, but I believe this House of Assembly enjoys a thing called privilege in this House of Assembly.

Anything we discuss in here would not pertain to – and I'm not a lawyer, maybe my colleague over here may or may not agree but my understand is that anything in this House of Assembly cannot be taken outside of here to be applied to any court cases and so on because of the privilege that we enjoy here. So there's nothing to stop us, concurrently, with any court actions, to have the Commissioner for Legislative Standards come in this House of Assembly and answer questions from his boss, which are all of us, he reports to us.

He was appointed by this House of Assembly under the Elections Act itself, it is even stated he can be removed from the House of Assembly due to issues with the election if it could be shown there was any kind of untoward activity or incompetence or whatever. It is stated right there in the act, he can be removed.

Obviously, it was thought through by whoever created this act to begin with that issues can arise and there was a remedy set there. Now, I'm not prejudging and saying he should be removed, but what I am saying is that he should come before this House of Assembly and answer questions. Once we've gathered all the facts then we will collectively decide whether there should be any action taken further than that or not.

I could talk about the election and all the issues but I'm not going to do it because I want to talk about the budget, but, again, what the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands said: Ditto.

I had the opportunity – and this is something I did speak to the Minister of Health and Community Services about, I raised it in one of our weekly chats, I guess, on the COVID committee, or whatever you want to call it. I participated, I guess, in a presentation, if you will, on Zoom this morning with the Canadian Cancer Society. I don't know if other Members have heard their presentation or not but anyway I did. They're advocating, obviously, for a number of things. They're pleased with the tobacco tax and so on. They want to see the government bring in legislation like we have in other provinces on the flavours for the vaping, to get rid of flavours because apparently that's the number one thing that's hooking teenagers on the vaping is the flavoured juices that are associated with it. They want to see that banned. I agree with that.

Of course, there are a lot of concerns they raised about the fact that because of COVID -19, and the impact on our health care system, they are predicting that there are going to be many more people than normal that are going to be diagnosed with cancer because everything was basically shut down for COVID, and either because of constraints within the health care system or simply people not wanting to go and get things checked out because they were afraid of COVID, that there are people probably who could have been diagnosed over the last year who weren't diagnosed. They are also fearful that a lot of people will now end up with more – once they do get diagnosed – their cancer may be advanced because they never had it checked over the past year.

They're concerned that there is going to be a capacity issue within our health care system as it relates to cancer patients as a result of COVID-19. This is going to be one of the things that is going to flow from this in the coming months. I'm sure it's on the Minister of Health and Community Service's radar. Despite our jabbering back and forth some times, I actually do have a lot of confidence in the man. I will say that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: It's not just the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development that – now we

have at least two good ministers. Notice I say at least. I'm only carrying on.

Another issue that I do just want to bring up before I get right into the budget is the animal protection act. Over the last year or so, I've been approached by a number of groups, animal protection groups and so on, who have had serious concerns and issues with the inadequacies associated to the animal protection act. I was very pleased to hear the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Yes, he's not – anyway, we won't get into that. Well, he's pretty good because he's from Bonavista North. I have to give him props for that at least.

I was glad to see that it was in the media recently that he said that the department is undertaking a review of the animal protection act. That's long overdue; I certainly support that.

One of the things I did ask him, because it wasn't mentioned – and I did email him; I haven't gotten a response yet. I'm assuming there's going to be a public consultation of some sort as we move through the process of developing a new animal protection act. I would hope that's going to happen. I would certainly encourage government to utilize engageNL and so on so that animal rights groups and other interested people – animal lovers – can have input into the new legislation. I'm hopeful that's going to happen. I just want to put it out there, though, to people who may be watching that do have a strong interest in animal protection that apparently there is a move afoot to work on addressing that. I certainly welcome it.

Mr. Speaker, getting to the budget more specifically, when I spoke to the budget yesterday, I kind of hit the tops of the trees on it. I think I talked about a number of things that were in the budget that I thought were positive things and things that I agreed with. I now want to just move on to some other issues.

I don't want to frame it as I'm against it, because I'm actually not, but I guess the things that I talked about the last time were sort of positive changes. We know that some of the other

changes that are going to have to come, which, if done properly, I'm going to support, may not be perceived as positive but more about being necessary changes. I am still with you, I say to the minister. I am still with you as long as it's done properly and as long as it's done fairly.

A lot of this budget debate and questions in Question Period and so on – and I've been listening intently, as I always do – have been more about the Budget Speech than the actual budget itself. I think we need to clarify any confusion that may be created by this, because I've had some people ask me about it. So when constituents ask me about it, I'm trying to tease out the – there are two separate pieces here.

The budget itself, which is what's in this Estimates book – not a big lot of changes. Not really. There are no major issues that I see in this budget document, per se. Yes, there are a few taxes and stuff like that. Nobody wants to see taxes. I don't want to see taxes and I'm sure nobody else wants to see it, but, yeah, there are a few changes there.

When we're talking about Nalcor, when we're talking about the school boards, when we're talking about consolidating the back-office functions of the health care authorities, when we're talking about Marble Mountain, even MUN – nothing has changed in this budget for MUN this year. Actually, I think they got an increase. I could be wrong but I thought I heard the minister say something about they were getting some extra money this year. Don't hold me to that, but there has really been nothing changed that would initiate a tuition increase this year, per se.

All of this is going to happen in the next budget and the one after that and the one after that, assuming it's done over time and methodically. A lot of the stuff that's being debated here is more about the Budget Speech and the signalling of things to come, as opposed to the actual budget, black and white on paper that we're going to be voting on. There is a difference. I want to make that distinction, because when I support this budget – and I will be supporting this budget. I don't mind saying that. I will.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: When I support this budget, I don't want that to be interpreted as necessarily supporting everything in the Budget Speech. There is a difference; there is a big difference. I'll just use this as an example: When we talk about, in the Budget Speech, consolidation of the backroom functions of the health care authorities, I support it in principle. I support the concept of doing it, but that doesn't mean that I'm going to support government, for example – and I'm not saying this is going to happen.

I'm not suggesting it's going to happen but if government were to say, okay, all the functions in Central, Labrador-Grenfell and Western Health, you're all fired, see you later and we'll just take care of it in St. John's. Now, I know that's not going to happen, but I'm just saying if that was the approach that we're going to do it in that kind of a matter, slash and burn – not consult, not take care of employees, not utilize attrition, not find alternate positions for people – and we were going to do in a way that was going to harm the system and make it more cumbersome, then I'm not going to support that.

But I am going to say I'm going to support the concept of doing it, as long as it's done properly. I support the analysis. I support the analysis of the Newfoundland Liquor Corporation – I support the analysis. But until I see that analysis to understand how much money is coming into government coffers right now, how much money is it costing us on the expense side – because you could always look at the revenue side. I know at the end of the day it's making money. We all know that. You can look at the revenue side and say: Wow, that's amazing, but how much is it costing us on the expense side? That has to be looked at.

Then you also have to look at, if we were to privatize – dare I say that word, but if it were to happen. If it were to happen, exactly what would be privatized? Is it the whole shebang? Is it just the retail? Is it the supply chain, the warehousing? What is it, what parts of it or is it everything in entirety?

If it were to be privatized, as an example, we need to do evaluation of those assets. What are they worth? It's one-time money. That's all it is, one-time money. We need to know how much those assets would be worth. Are we getting a

hundred thousand dollars? Are we getting a million dollars? Are we getting a billion dollars? I don't know. I have no idea. What is it worth? That has to be part of the consideration.

If it were to be privatized, how much money would come into the government coffers then? Would it be the same? At the end of the day, would we still have the same – I'm going to use the term – “net profit” for the government? Is it the same value to the taxpayer or are we going to have to take less? How much less? Maybe we're going to get more because we're also offloading the expenses. Maybe we'll get more money. I don't know, but you need to know and we don't know that now.

Then, of course, you have to factor in the concept of persons working with the NLC are making a decent living and being able to support their families as opposed to, if it were privatized, everyone is making minimum wage and they can't support their families. Then, they're coming to government through the back door for government programs and assistance to help them. Not necessarily but it could and, again, it is part of the analysis.

I'm not interested in making a whole bunch of families less well off in order to make a few millionaires multi-millionaires. I have no interest in that. I would also like to know, if it were to happen, would it be offered up to local Newfoundland and Labrador entrepreneurs that are going to keep the money in Newfoundland? Or are we going to allow, like we've seen happen with our cannabis, Canopy Growth, a Mainland outfit coming in paying minimum wage and all the profits are going to the Mainland?

Are we going to allow Loblaws to come in and take over the liquor stores? Is that what's going to happen because I'm not so sure I'm supportive of that. Do we need another Walmart? Walmart comes in – yeah, a bunch of minimum wage jobs and all the profits are gone out of Newfoundland. There are all kinds of issues around it. While I support the concept of having a look, that doesn't mean I support it until I see all the facts.

I can apply that same logic to other things. I have a lot of reason – and I do – to be upset with

certain people in Nalcor, but it is only certain people and I don't want that to be confused either. There are a handful of individuals, I'm going to say – I'm going to be nice; he's waiting for me to say hoodwinked. He's waiting for me to say it because I have said it so many times. They hoodwinked the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We saw the Muskrat Falls inquiry. Those individuals have not been held accountable, which is very, very disappointing. It's infuriating, actually – it is absolutely infuriating. I have said in this House of Assembly before, the \$6-million man would still be in courts trying to get his money. I'd be prepared to spend more to keep him fighting on many levels and others besides, who are still there.

But the concept of Nalcor – now, I agree. If you look at Nalcor, the Muskrat Falls Project is pretty much completed. So do we need Nalcor, NL Hydro and OilCo? Then, plus, we have the department. Is all that needed? I think most of us would agree it's not needed. That has nothing to do with any vendetta against Nalcor. You can call it Nalcor. Let's call it Nalcor. Although, I think we would be better off, to be honest with you – the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – I think that name has to go, psychologically, if nothing else. I think that name has to change, whatever it is.

Whatever you call it, it makes sense. There's too much duplication. I support that in concept. I absolutely do support it. In the same way as I talked about the health care authorities and so on, I'm not going to support yanking the rug from under the feet of hard-working people who go to work every day and have established themselves and are feeding their families. I'm not going to support just yanking the rug out from under their feet. Again, it has to be done properly. We have to utilize attrition, early retirements, finding other opportunities in other government agencies to look after anybody and so on.

We have to respect collective agreements throughout this whole process. That's the other thing. I'm not a socialist, by any means, but one thing I did have a big problem with, with Dame Moya Greene, was the commentary – which was just like waving a red flag at a bull, as far as I'm

concerned – about collective agreements and legislating away rights. I, for one, am not going to support that either. It has to be done properly and we have to follow the proper processes.

I guess my message is, in terms of this actual budget, I will repeat: I support this budget. I support a lot of the good things that are here. I will support a lot of the challenging things that need to be done in the future, as long as they're done properly and fairly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to start again on a theme that I spoke about in the first time I spoke on the budget, but in relation to this amendment as well.

Yesterday, I asked questions regarding the pension plan. Really, what I was after was an acknowledgement that Moya Greene, in the PERT report, got it wrong. The inaccuracies, if they would be used to make decisions and have an influence on the budget, have the real possibility of doing some serious harm and making bad decisions.

One of the recommendations that she did make was to move the current public sector pension plans into a defined collective contribution plan. Well, that's impossible to do.

She made a number of statements about the liability – about it being \$1 billion more and it's already started to have effects on people and undermining confidence in the pension plans.

To be clear, government's only outstanding liability is the government's promissory note, at this point \$1.7 billion for the teachers' plan held by the teachers' plan corporation. So we understand this, it was to pay for pre-reform obligations to teachers who were already retired at the time of the reform who could not make any contributions to it. Even if it's turned into a defined collective contribution plan or made any

changes, that liability is still there. Government would have to pay it instead of the Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation.

The promissory note is similar to any Newfoundland and Labrador bond held by banks or entities to which the province owes money. Government doesn't have the ability through legislation or otherwise to arbitrarily change the teachers' pension plan for already retired teachers. It cannot be done, they're on the hook.

Now, Dame Moya Greene should have known better than to have made such a simplistic conclusion and recommendation. She missed the mark. I didn't hear that yesterday, I'm saying it now, she missed the mark. She got her facts wrong.

I did ask where she got that in a teleconference, in a technical briefing; it was from the Department of Finance. Now, I realize a lot of people from the Department of Finance at the time had moved over to the Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation, but what she should have done and what she didn't do at that time was to speak to the two pension corporations that are now managing successfully the pensions.

In an audited financial statement of December 2020, the Teachers' Pension Plan – I'll speak to that – is actually almost 115 per cent funded. It has a surplus of assets. To say that we have an unfunded liability of \$1 billion more than six years ago was misleading.

When it's done, and I have to make this clear that teachers at the time agreed to reduce benefits by almost \$400 million and they're paying – this is all on younger teachers now – higher premiums; higher than what the requirements are, the administrative costs are. They are paying some 11.35 of their salary, matched.

What the Teachers' Pension Plan Corporation did and what the public sector pension plan did is they removed liability from government's books and they both made the plans financially stable. Actually, in the Teachers' Pension Plan: \$6 billion in assets and it has eliminated the unfunded liability going forward. So the plan is actually heading towards one of the triggers

where you could see the reduction of premiums for both teachers and government – a savings.

I can tell you that at the time I was the president I worked hard to fix this plan. We had access to government actuaries at the time that they hired; we paid for it. We hired Robert Blais, the top pensions' expert in the country to make sure that this plan worked. As he said at that time: Our plan wasn't mature, it was old, but we got it on stable footing.

But here's what has happened, recently people have – actually, I got a call from a few teachers wondering if they should commute their retired benefits, if they should get out of the plan right off the bat. Now, if you have enough teachers doing that or enough people you will undermine the stability of the plan. That is what Moya Greene's comments have done, and that record needs to be straight.

Secondly, I want to look at – I just looked at the budget around some of the recommendations in the Moya Greene report and what is in the budget.

2013 saw the amalgamation of four school districts into one. I spent most of my teaching career on the Southern Shore and I remember the school board; it was one of the best places of my teaching career, I can tell you that – half of my career there. But when you walked into the school district office in Mobile – it was a bungalow – all of, I guess, the consultants were there; we were first among equals. That's about it; that's what they were. They visited the school and it was very much a human enterprise.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. DINN: You got it. Frank went around to every classroom throughout the whole district talking to each classroom. But, you know, you don't get that now.

As they became more amalgamated, they became more corporate headquarters. I don't think, overall, it was an improvement. But I'll tell you this, I don't know if any analysis was ever done if, indeed, that amalgamation saved money or if it actually streamlined it, made it more efficient, education better or if the number of staff hired actually increased.

But let's take a look at this. In her report, Moya Greene talks about eliminating school boards, both the francophone school board and the English School District. No talk of analysis first. In the budget, basically, we're going to take the appropriate steps to integrate into the department. I heard the minister say today that he will complete an analysis after the transition has been completed.

AN HON. MEMBER: No (inaudible).

J. DINN: That's what I have. I stand to be corrected, but I wrote it down: Analysis will be completed once the transition has been completed. I think that needs to start right now before we make that decision.

However, for the Francophone school board it's not about integrating, it's about developing a more defined accountability framework. That's what the budget says. Why the difference? Is it because also that maybe Moya Greene got it wrong that you can't eliminate the Francophone school board, there are some charter implications? Got it wrong.

With regional health authorities, the recommendation from Moya Greene was to "Review the current structure and consolidate the four Regional Health Authorities into one" The budget states that the government is "announcing an integrated corporate services model that will streamline ... payroll, finance, accounting, human resources, information management and technology procurement." Why the difference?

By the way, the only time that Moya Greene mentions the use of a review or analysis is in the RHAs, to review the current structures. Why no amalgamation? Why are we looking at it streamlined? Why wasn't that a possibility not offered, if it's about eliminating duplication? Is that what's going to happen with the NLESD and the department or not?

Nalcor: Moya Greene says to "eliminate Nalcor Energy and merge its components into Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro in a phased approach, including the merging of power management, electricity sales, generation, and transmission" The budget, however, says to "immediately begin a comprehensive analysis

and reorganization of Nalcor to streamline, remove duplication" That's the only place in the budget that it talks about a comprehensive analysis.

It doesn't say do a comprehensive analysis with the RHAs, it doesn't talk about doing a comprehensive analysis with integrating the NLESD, but when it comes to Nalcor – and I'm not sure if it's because of political connections or otherwise – we'll do the analysis here. I notice that there are some differences here in the approach to Moya Greene, divergences from what she recommends and even within.

Now, I'm not sure if integrating the English School District into the department is going to be better or not, but I would like to see some evidence before we start, an analysis that's presented here and then let's talk. Because I can tell you that as a teacher in the field, my professional life did not get any better as a result of amalgamating four school districts into one. For schools in Labrador, actually, it became a nightmare.

So I've been looking at this. Why the different approach? Was there something wrong? Are there other factors at play? That's basically been a lot of the questions that I've heard from my colleagues in the Official Opposition as to the rationale. That's what we're looking for.

Moya Greene goes on to talk about that K-to-6 teachers do not teach math – do not know how to teach math, anecdotally, and we're going to make a recommendation on that. I can tell you I'm married to a primary teacher and my daughter is a primary teacher. They know how to teach math better than I do as a high school teacher.

I would say that half the time it's the curriculum changes that come in and the new initiatives brought on by government that here's what we should do – that before anyone has a chance to get used to a program, the programs change. I can tell you one thing that every generation says: Well, that's not how I learned how to do math. I had a slide rule and a table. Not even a timetable in high school; I forget what it was. That's what we used. Calculators take care of that right now.

Eight-hour day for teachers: recommends extending teachers to eight hours a day. Now I'm thinking as a teacher: Perfect, I'm walking out with my arms swinging because just about every study that's been done shows that teachers work on average 50 hours-plus a week, and primary probably more.

Schools: I did my teaching internship in Netteswell Comprehensive School over in Harlow, England. I was impressed with that; it's a massive school. It even had a farm on it, a farm for the students – it had everything. It was a comprehensive school; it was everything to everyone.

I visited a neighbourhood school in Vancouver. What I was most impressed with is that they had a garage. I think it was a three- or four-port garage there for students. They had theatre; they had pottery rooms, the whole bit, in addition to. I'm thinking, if you want to improve education, if you want to start giving students experience, that's what you're building. You start looking at these things.

Here's the problem: Newfoundland and Labrador schools with equipment. I don't know how many schools I visited as president where we had brand new equipment – chop saws, everything else – still in the box. Why? No teacher to teach it. I was in one school where one teacher took it on, the French teacher. She built walls the way that I would have built walls: crooked, but she took it on. The biggest challenge at that time is that if we're going to resource it, we have to make sure we resource it.

SMART Boards: \$5,000 a shot. That was a few years ago. They have to be replaced. You think about if you have a school with 20 classrooms; there's a challenge. Or if you have Chromebooks, but you don't have the Internet capacity to support it.

Earlier, I tossed about the questions on the sugar-sweetened drinks. It's interesting; I had a call from a rather irate school councillor who was so frustrated. She talked about the investment in 811 mental health phone line. I'm going to read a few lines from what she said here: The investment in the 811 mental health phone line is not really an investment in mental health. Individuals struggling with significant

mental health issues due to trauma or mental illness depend on a safe relationship and are often not comfortable using the phone to speak, let alone to contact a stranger about their most challenging symptoms. Trauma informs; therapists provide safe space and guided techniques to calm their brain and nervous system before engaging in dialogue.

To imply that health, food choice and exercise are purely a matter of individual knowledge, choice and intellect disregards the powerful research that has highlighted the links between trauma, mental health, digestion and chronic illness and it disregards powerful opportunities for us to actually take meaningful steps. She pointed out to me that those who are going through trauma don't often have the ability to digest nutritious food. They're in fight-or-flight mode, grabbing sugar, grabbing energy.

There was a recent article in the *Journal of Women's Health*: "The Association of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder with Fast Food and Soda Consumption and Unhealthy Weight Loss Behaviors Among Young Women" concludes that "PTSD symptoms adversely affect both eating and dieting behaviors of young women. These behaviors may have negative long-term consequences for the health of females with PTSD symptoms."

My colleague from Topsail - Paradise stole my question; I think someone informed him of it. It was the very question I was going to ask. Here's the thing: I wanted to know where that money was going, and that is the key thing. It is not good enough merely to put a tax on a soft drink unless we're going to find a way to make healthy food choices more available and also deal with some of the underlying causes.

As I've told you when I was at the Ches Penney Centre of Hope kitchen, it is amazing how many people there – when you come in, they'd get a drink, I would be serving them a drink, they'd ask for five, six or seven packs of sugar for their coffee. I was amazed by it. It makes sense, especially if their trauma – yeah, that's their high.

I guess, in the end, a budget is about choices and about people.

I will read you an example, this is a gentleman who lives in my district. Laboured as a labourer all his life, owns a very small home in my district; living on Old Age Security. I think he gets around \$16,000 or so a year. He has \$1,333 a month to pay for his expenses. He's 75 years old, lives in his own home, which he has paid off after many years of working. His monthly expenses include: home insurance, city property taxes, Newfoundland Power, oil, medical, dental, gas, car maintenance and so on and so forth.

His one pleasure – I was talking to him – is to go out on the Witless Bay Line to do a little bit of trout. He's looking at aging in place as part of *The Way Forward* plan. He feels he will have to go into a home sooner – and this is the thing that he is looking at right now, he feels he is going to have find a way to get into a home sooner than he'd like to and give up the comfort of his own home he carefully paid for and maintained his entire life. The cost of living in a home will burn through the equity in his small home very quickly so who will foot the bill then? It's going to come back on us.

So for this gentleman, he's facing a real struggle. I look at the number of seniors in my district and I'm sure, as in any other district who are living independently: that's what I want when I get to be that age. But it has got to be at some point here where we have to look at how do we help our seniors and how do we help keep people independent and out of a long-term care facility, which as my cousin would say: a long-term death, in some cases.

In conclusion here with this, what we're looking for in this budget is the rationale for the decisions. If it's being based on Moya Greene, there are things in there that cause me to believe that she doesn't have it right. Are the differences that we see in how the budget approaches it, is it a recognition that she didn't get it right? More importantly, what's the rationale for the different actions that have taken place in terms of regional health authorities, Nalcor, and the districts? Why is it that one is automatic integration? Why are we just going to integrate corporate services? Why aren't we going to do an analysis first?

That's been the part that's been confusing people; certainly confusing and what we're seeking answers to.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll carry on with what my hon. colleague from St. John's Centre said about education. I have a lot of people in the trades and stuff in my district. A lot of young people go off to trade school and come back for the opportunities in the mining industry that's up there. One thing we always found was that when it comes to block training, to do your bocks to get your Red Seal, they were always forced to go away from Lab West to do their block training. They wouldn't have an instructor or anyone come up or anything like that to do the training.

They always found that a big group of them would leave Lab West, an entire group of them would be all together, in another community somewhere else. They spent a lot of their own personal money to get out there and they'd all be sitting in the same classroom together somewhere; it could be Stephenville, it could be out around Pouch Cove, somewhere like that.

We always asked the question: Why are we doing this? Why wouldn't the training be brought to those tradesmen? It's one of those things about making choices, making efficiencies and making stuff like that, but also the choices we make when we're even scheduling programming or anything like that. It's always been the frustration of a lot of tradespeople up my way: Why are we taking an area that has a large amount of tradespeople and bringing the services to them so they can get their training done and everything like that instead of sending them all out to a different location, together as a large group, to do this training and then find out later we have to reimburse them for a lot their costs and stuff like that later?

You look at your costs, it's the same thing. Why are we spending more for something we can

spend less on and find a more efficient service like that? This is not a new topic. This has been brought up time and time again: Why are we doing things like this? We look at all the advancements of technology and stuff like that.

I know we did a pilot project up there one time when it came to heavy equipment technicians where we actually had the class in Lab West using distance learning and they were a part of another class that was out in Stephenville and they were able to do their block training that way. At the time, all of the tradespeople were very pleased with the way that their block training was carried out. Then to find out that was a one-time thing; they didn't carry on with it. It became very frustrating because, then, all of these Labrador tradespeople ended up having to pay a large portion of money and leave their families to go out to a school, as a group to another school where they were the majority in the classroom.

Another thing funny about it (inaudible), there's never been a case where people from the Island were forced to come to Labrador to do their block training. It's a very one-sided street in that sense. It's something that we really need to go through. It was actually a recommendation in the recent post-secondary report stating a review of block training and apprenticeship training. Maybe this is a good start now, to review the apprenticeship programs, the Red Seal programs and stuff, and make it more efficient for the students and the tradespeople. Because, you know, as a philosopher always said: The foundation of a state is built on the education of its youth.

This is a good opportunity that we can build a foundation on the education of our youth in this province and we can start by making it as least inconvenient as possible to get an education or to continue your education in this province. Because putting barriers up in front of people is only going to hurt society; it's not going to advance us further. Putting barriers in place like cost, transportation, lack of opportunity, if we can knock down all of those barriers we'd have a very sturdy foundation.

A lot of the barriers that I found at home in Labrador – we do have a lot of barriers to education up in Labrador and we should be

starting to knock down those walls and building a stronger foundation for those youth. There are a lot of opportunities, a lot of bright minds up there and living in a place like Labrador you get a little creative and have a bit of ingenuity. So if we give these people the tools that they want and they need, I'm sure we'll reap the benefits in a very short period of time.

It's a great place, Labrador, to actually try out new methods of education and different ways of delivering education because we're such an isolated place, not very many communities that are spread out over a vast space of land. I'm sure we can get very creative and deliver some education and some opportunities to the youth up there moving forward. Even with the system we have now, we have been very creative. I think we can grow that beyond anything. Let's think outside the box. Let's great creative and deliver some interesting post-secondary.

I know, last year, the Labrador Institute's Memorial University office in Labrador West closed. That was a large blow to Labrador West. We do have a lot of young people; we do have a very healthy high school population. Unfortunately, losing that office was a big blow to Labrador West residents. It kind of seemed counterproductive to what we want to see in Labrador. We want more Labradorians to go to Memorial University. They do have a great facility and everything going on in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, but from the point of view of Lab West, people interested in engineering, trades and things like that, having that office closed, it did hurt.

It was counterproductive to what we should be doing in Labrador: encouraging young people to attend a Newfoundland and Labrador university and have that opportunity. I feel that without replacing that office or expanding the role of Memorial University in Labrador, especially in Labrador West, may send our students to universities in the Maritimes or Quebec. It was disappointing, indeed, to see that we did lose that office. Hopefully, it doesn't have a negative impact on young people in my constituency to go into Memorial University.

We should be expanding opportunities up there. There's a great opportunity in the mining industry. I know we always beat around and talk

about the idea of a mining centre of excellence in Labrador. Maybe we should take an opportunity to relook at that initiative and maybe expand on research and development in the mining industry in Labrador West, because there are lots and lots of opportunities there.

Today, I had the great opportunity to talk with a junior miner who is looking at starting operations in the next year or so in Labrador West. There's some great opportunity there. Starting and building a new mine is not an easy feat, but at the same time, it's a great opportunity for research and development and to get young people interested in the world of engineering, mining engineering and the trades. We need to explore every opportunity to advance and move young people into relevant trades and stuff in this province, and keep people home.

When people hear good stuff about advancements in technology and opportunity in a region, usually that's where people seem to turn and migrate towards. Even the miner I was talking to talked about how this province has a lot of opportunity in the mining industry. Maybe we make hay while the sun shines and take this opportunity to, maybe, invest in technology, research and development and mining substantially. It's a growing industry. I know there is some money in this budget for that, but there's always room for more, to advance that and push it forward more.

We talk about miners; now I want to talk about the miners of retirement. We do have a lot of seniors staying in my district. I know I presented a petition earlier about it and the hon. Minister of CSSD did respond to it. I thank him for that because we need to take this really seriously. We do have seniors in our region that don't have adequate care or housing in the future and they are finding it hard and difficult. Home care, level-3 care: Like I said, I always say we do have long-term care, but it doesn't meet the needs of everybody there.

We do need to look at affordable senior living and assisted living as much as we can to keep these people home. They came to Labrador West in the '50s, '60s and '70s; they built a community that's very strong and vibrant. We've survived many ups and downs in the

industry and we're still chugging along. These people deserve and should have the right to stay in their community and watch their grandchildren grow and enjoy the community that they built.

We need to take the time to help seniors age in place in affordable units, in affordable housing, but also make sure that there's care available to them, especially home care and so on. Like I said, again, any home care workers who are interested in moving to Labrador West, I encourage it. We do need home care workers. We would greatly appreciate your service to our community.

It's really important that we take care of our seniors and take care of the opportunities that they've brought to us in Labrador West. I thank them for building the community that I was fortunate to grow up in. I'm very passionate about Labrador West; it's a great place, great opportunity. It's a great place to raise families. There will always be opportunity in Labrador West. Like I said before, there are lots and lots of ore in the ground, lots of iron in the ground. I'll be there for a long time and I hope to see my children there for a long time and take up the opportunities that I also had. Moving forward, we really need to take a serious look at helping seniors out to the best of our ability and to provide an opportunity for them to age in place and stay in their communities. We have to be able to do this.

We have great tourism opportunities, too. Labrador West: Everyone says it's a mining industry. It does take up a lot of oxygen in the room, but there is opportunity to carve out other industries in Labrador West, too. I always go back to tourism. I have a soft spot for tourism. It's a great industry; it's a great opportunity to be a show-off; show off what you have, show off the great community that we live in and for people to see everything we've built.

Another thing is we have opportunity there in – we don't really have to build much tourism traction because the natural beauty of Labrador is what a lot of people are seeking. Once again, we have to take an opportunity in adventure tourism and turn our gaze towards Labrador a bit and build upon what we have there.

I know my hon. colleague from Lake Melville mentioned a project that even I was involved with a little bit before I came to the House of Assembly with the branding of Route 389 in Quebec, Route 500 through Labrador and Route 510, showcasing the interesting, unique history of that area. We have an opportunity there.

Right now, the Quebec government has started to re-route Route 389 so it actually shortens the highway by almost 40 kilometres. It's even faster to get to Labrador now from Montreal and they're paving it. This is the opening of the door for Labrador in the sense that people can easily drive from some of the largest centres in this country into Labrador even faster on a paved highway.

The door is open now and it's time for us to grab this opportunity of investing tourism into Labrador. Because once that project is complete on Route 389, there's nothing stopping people, really, from coming up in a – I expect that within the next couple of years when that's done, motorhomes and adventure tourism will start to trickle in to Labrador West. Therefore, once we come through the gateway there, it's just on to Lake Melville, Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and the Torngat Mountains.

The opportunity is here, it is coming. We should be ready for it and to put some investment into that region so we can have an opportunity to showcase Labrador and keep people in Labrador, instead of just being an opportunity to drive through. We want to keep people there; we want to slow them down and instead of spending one day, spending five days. That's the thing now. Unfortunately, with the mining industry in Lab West, sometimes it sucks all the oxygen out of the room. We need to make sure that we place some key investments in Labrador West to start the seed so that we have the tourism industry blossom there.

I know the Member for Lake Melville, my colleague there; he did mention our trip to Churchill Falls and the opportunity there to talk about Churchill Falls. That is an interesting piece of infrastructure. From a tourism point of view, from an engineering point of view, even from any other point of view, that piece of infrastructure is phenomenal. It's unbelievable when you sit down and talk to people there at

Churchill Falls and they tell you: We can make it bigger. You're like: Oh, really, you can make this bigger.

They just look at you: Yeah, we can make this plant more efficient, larger and we can put out more capacity. You stop and think: You know, this is a massive project; this is not just a little tiny dam. This thing is unreal; how big it is. They look at you and tell you: We can make it bigger, we can make it more efficient and we can put out more electricity just from this plant alone. You have to stop and think: That's phenomenal that this piece of infrastructure that's in our province has not even reached its full potential. It's fascinating to see.

Like I said, the mining industry sucks a lot of oxygen out of the room. In my district, one of the things they want is power; the ability that we can actually continue to develop just one piece of infrastructure. We have for the ability to provide electricity to the mining industry in Labrador, and any other industry, in retrospect, and that we can actually continue to grow Labrador in a way with a piece of infrastructure we already have. It's interesting to see that we have the ability to take this, without having to build a whole other facility but to modify a facility we have. That's something we should seriously take a look at: adding the capacity of what we already have to benefit other industries and grow industries that we already have as well. We have the tools, we have the ability and now we just need to turn and see how we put the two together to actually help grow and evolve what we have.

It was interesting to see that we have emerging mining industries, too; not just iron ore. There's still more nickel, copper, gold and rare-earth minerals. There's still all of that to be found in Labrador and we need to take the opportunity to nurture that industry in the sense that we want to be the global leaders in mining and we want to be the global leaders in the green industries. We want to be the ones supplying the minerals for the batteries and all of the other infrastructures that we want to build to help reduce our carbon footprint in this world. We should be the ones leading. Everyone should be talking about all of the minerals that come out of Labrador and off the Island of Newfoundland.

We have people interested, so let's make sure we nurture the industry, but also make sure that we give them the guidelines and a clear understanding that we can do this. We want to do this in a fair way; a way that protects the environment at the same time. Be the ones that the European Union looks at us and says: That's how you do it. That's how you can be a global leader and environmentally responsible.

They're the ones who are setting some very stringent criteria for trade. Well, do you know what? Maybe we can be the ones to lead the country. We can follow the rules; we can be a global leader in green mining. That's how we should approach this.

There is now a concerted effort to only purchase materials and minerals and stuff that are from a point of view that it was sustainable, environmentally conscious and trade-friendly. Maybe we can take up the flag and be the world leader in how to be that industry, be that environmentally conscious and be what the world is looking for now.

We have the opportunity. I want to leave this place better than I found it. I want to hand it off to my children and say: I did everything in my power to protect the environment and protect what we have. I don't want my daughter in here one day cleaning up my mess. I want to leave it here that she just continues on with our legacy.

That's how I feel; we have to leave this planet better than we found it. Hand it off to our future generations in a way that they will say: Do you know what? Dad did a good job. I'll continue what he did. That's how I want to look at it.

We have a lot of opportunities ahead of us. We have a lot of challenges ahead of us, but, I think, if we look at the world around us, we have everything that we need to shuffle the cards in a way now that we can play a good hand and we can find our way out of this.

We also have to protect the environment and we also have to protect future generations from any other negative effects because, unfortunately, we were handed a world a bit carbon heavy and a bit hard to navigate now. It left us in a climate challenge that we have to navigate, but we can do it. We can make the right decisions now that

everything going forward, we're not doing any more damage than what was already done.

It can be done in a way that's affordable. It can be done in a way that's environmentally conscious. It can be done in a way that protects jobs but also – I honestly believe the green industry and (inaudible), we're going to add a lot more jobs to the economy because it takes a lot of people power to actually do these big changes. It's not going to be two or three people, it's going to be hundreds of thousands of people having to make a concerted effort and work towards this.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just speaking on the budget, a couple of things I wanted to go over. I'm just going to go over by the headings there. In this book it talks about transforming government. In that section it talks about the delivery of marine services to coastal and remote communities. It says it's important, but then it goes on to a however and talks about cost. Then there's a therefore, and then it says: "... we will invite joint solutions for a more effective way to maintain and improve the delivery of ferry service, taking into consideration the perspectives of the people who use it."

It's only in Labrador that the ferry service is privatized and people are getting nervous about joint solutions, effective ways, because you hear unions talk about it in the media about privatization. Privatization is feared.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. EVANS: The thing, Mr. Speaker, is regardless of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

L. EVANS: You're either going to have to stop the time or stop them. I don't mind as long as the mic can pick up what I'm saying. I don't care really what they say, because, in actual fact, I think they're a part of the problem, Mr. Speaker.

But getting back to just this banter about privatization. Oh goodness, that's not what we're saying. But do you want to know something? Why is it only in Labrador that the ferries were privatized? Think about that now. There's fear mongering – that's the words I just heard, fear mongering. But, at the end of the day, that's already been done. I talk about the gap that's a great divide.

Now, also, taking into consideration the perspectives of the people: Do you know that for my district when they were changing the ferry system to stop the freight from coming from the Island, which kept the cost of food and building materials down, that I continue to talk about over and over again, there was no consultation? Actually, there was a legal responsibility to consult with the people. Actually, the first minister in 2018 was in the public stating – the first minister of Nunatsiavut Government stating – that in actual fact the province was in violation of the Land Claims Agreement because they had a duty to consult and they didn't.

They brought in this service that just came out of Goose Bay to the North Coast and basically burdened us with all the trucking. There was no consultation. Regardless of whether they're going to privatize the Island service or not – and people are upset about it. I'll tell you why people are upset about it. It's because they are concerned that with privatization will come less services, higher costs and loss of jobs. That's when privatization is done wrong and we have a history of doing things wrong.

I am not against privatization when it enhances services, when in actual fact, it cuts costs, but the whole point is that there is a lot of fear out there. I'll tell you something now; they've already done it to us. This is how it goes. Anyone who basically had to travel to the coast during the summer, and was going to go by marine ferry, would understand; anyone in the middle of the winter when they're trying to feed their family and they're trying to go down and

buy groceries. It is ridiculous in actual fact. Transforming government – right.

Health outcomes: Now, being positive, I really like the Physical Activity Tax Credit. It's a refundable tax credit up to \$2,000 per family. I think you're going to have to clarify, because in my family, one of my sisters has two children and the other sister has five – five kids all playing sports, all doing everything. The thing about it is when it comes to tax credits if you're going to actually encourage families to be healthy you also have to make sure it's fair. So think about that; also, if you're a family of one. There are different issues at play so we go back to clarifying things. I think what we should do is try to make it available to everybody, make it a positive tax credit.

How is this tax credit actually going to be given out? Is it when you get your gym membership or you pay your hockey fees? In a lot of my communities they don't even have a rink. In the community of Rigolet, they've been years now trying to get some covering for their outdoor hockey rink because they can only play on it a few days when it's not snowing or it's not too cold. They have been applying, trying to get some moneys to put some dome over their hockey rink.

Hopedale doesn't even have an outdoor hockey rink. It goes back to what the Member for – I forget. He was talking about gymnasiums. Well, with the COVID shutdown of all the school activities and the closure of the school gyms, I have three communities in my district that don't have a gym that's not attached to the school. Since COVID hit, actually, no one in the community has been able to play any gym sports. It has impacted not only our children, but our adults; not only on a physical level, but also on the emotional level. It's actually creating a lot of issues and it's all compounded by the gap in services and infrastructure that's available.

Just going on. Another thing in this book, it talks about: "Chronic diseases impact the health of the population, as well as the sustainability of the health care system." I agree with that. There are no truer words spoken. Chronic diseases impact the health of our population. We know that. In my district, we're still actually dealing with outbreaks of TB. It's 2021. Actually, just a

couple of years ago – two or three; I have no concept of time – we had a young boy die from TB, in this day and age. I knew his father and I knew his mother.

That young boy actually, to me, was a huge – I don't know how to put into words what that young boy meant to his family. He was smart, he was polite and he was energetic. You could look at him and you could see he was going to go through the school system, that he was going to go on; he was going to get a good job; he was going to be a good support to his mom and his dad in their old age. He died of TB; he's gone.

Also, a very, very talented singer, one of our greatest assets to the Inuktitut language because he was known for his ability to sing in choirs. Actually, he was sought all over the world. The talent, everybody still talks about him. Just recently, he died of TB. These things happen. It's 2021, but you know something? It's like we're still back in the '50s and '60s when it comes to health care – chronic diseases.

At the root of that, one of the biggest problems we have with TB is shortage of housing. We still have overcrowding in houses because it goes back to houses are too expensive: \$400,000 to \$500,000. I already explained to people in this House a building lot costs \$250,000. It's not the cost of the land. It's not the land; it's to actually develop the land to put in the water and sewer lines there and then you have to build a house: \$250,000.

I'd like to compare pictures of a \$400,000 house in Nain compared to a \$400,000 house in St. John's. I think it'd be pretty surprising what we'd see. Four hundred thousand dollars now is the bottom line, a small house. I laugh inappropriately because it's too bad; it's too tragic, it's too sad. The response that we grew up with was to kind of laugh. I think it was basically a strategy with our parents to keep us from giving up hope.

Anyway, chronic diseases do impact the population and it does actually affect the sustainability of the health care system. If you look at the burden to the province for Labrador-Grenfell Health, if you got rid or solved a lot of the problems with chronic illnesses, it would go a long way to lessen the burden of the costs. I

think there's a lot of merit in that. I just want to make the point that I made over and over again: Chronic diseases impact the health of the population and the sustainability of the health care system.

When you look at my district, what came first? The chicken or the egg? I'll use that saying because we have a chronic housing shortage, we have chronic overcrowding and we have chronic illnesses. Our health care system costs a lot. It's related; it truly is related. I think prevention and, also, I think we need to straighten out some of the problems that my district is dealing with.

I do like the idea of a 20-cent tax on a litre of sugar drinks but, of course, we need to see the details. I realize this is not coming out until next year. But if we're going to tax sugary drinks because they impact the health of our children and all our populations, we have to make sure that tax is put back into preventative measures and to make sure that we are actually improving the health care system; that it's not a tax grab where we don't know where it goes, because that tends to happen.

Another thing in this book is, it talks about a million dollars towards continued support for the Kids Eat Smart Foundation. In this book they talk about the Kids Eat Smart Foundation, "which supports the education, health, and well-being of school-aged children through nutrition." It shows the importance, the value this province is placing on the nutrition of our children. Yet, I talked earlier about three freezer-burnt chicken breast costing \$44, so when it comes to nutrition, we are limited by our choices.

Earlier during Estimates this morning it was brought up in the House, actually, I think the Member for Lake Melville was talking about the caribou herd and the decimation of the caribou herd. It's not just the Red Wine caribou herd; it's the whole George River caribou herd. It's borderline now whether it can actually rebound; it's very vulnerable.

We talk about species and the preservation of species is so important. The Member for Lake Melville, you know, that was his life, working with wildlife and the environment before he came into the House. It was the same with me.

But what a lot of people don't realize, it's not only about preserving a species; for us, for the Inuit and the Innu of the North Coast of Labrador, it was the primary food source for the people.

I remember when the caribou was gone and we weren't allowed to hunt, that was the agreement; the Nunatsiavut signed on with the agreement, I remember my mother saying to me: Well, what are you going to live on? You can only eat so many partridges, because of the meat. You can only eat so many ducks. But do you want to know something? Every day we could eat caribou. We could eat caribou 365 days out of the year because you could make it into soups, you could stew it, you could have roast – so many things with caribou.

Caribou was our beef, and that's gone. For us, it has increased the cost of food, but also it decreased the availability of food to the people, and it's really impacted our nutrition. I think that if had as many people upset about the extinction of the caribou and about the population of the caribou, if we had as much of that media and attention and support going to the Indigenous people for the loss of their primary food, I think we will be a little bit better off.

I say on the record there has to be something done. It's something that the Member for Lake Melville and I talked about quite a bit, actually, especially during the election because during the election was when we had the Innu come over from Quebec and was hunting caribou that were very, very low in numbers, actually. I would say that each time the Quebec Innu come over we're jeopardizing the herd. Eventually, there's not going to be any of those caribou left, the Red Wine caribou.

My biggest concern is that it's going to be allowed to continue. If we don't stop it it's going to just continue on. After that herd is gone then they're going to start coming up towards the North Coast and we will never be able to have our caribou population rebound. So our food source will be gone forever.

I do support taxes on cigarettes, but it's very, very important to actually make sure that the money we take from taxes on cigarettes goes back into actually helping people quit and

detering the youth from smoking. I totally support access to sanitary products being free of charge for students. I think it was my fellow Member from Labrador, Lab West it was, actually talking about that the other day, or it might have been the other Third Party.

The thing about it is, there is a huge correlation to access to sanitary products and attendance in school with young girls. If we're going to empower young girls we have to make sure they have equal access to education. That's not discussed very much. So I'm glad that the government is taking a lead on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Yeah.

Another thing I'd like to talk about is another sentence in here in this book, still under Health. It says: "Technology is critical to health care delivery and sustainability, and ultimately enhances patient care" I support increases in technology and improvements in technology. People think I'm going to talk about the Internet, but I'm not going to talk about the bad quality of Internet we have and the fact that when people are going down and trying to have a consult with the doctor they actually can't because it locks up. I'm not going to talk about that.

What I'm going to talk about now is we have to be careful, because if you're using technology to compensate for lack of services like – in my district, it's really difficult to see a doctor. In actual fact, in my hometown of Makkovik, they actually have not had a doctor come in over a year. Actually, it's been almost two years. There is actually an agreement where the doctor is supposed to come every six weeks or whatever.

Being able to see a doctor is difficult, but we can't use virtual as a substitution. Technology has to enhance the services. If you're going to substitute a doctor's visit with a doctor consult using something like Zoom or one of the other programs, you have to make sure that you're just not increasing the lack of actual medical attention, the quality of service. It's very, very important for us because right now there are already huge gaps in our access to quality medical services.

I would be remiss if I didn't actually bring up again the issue with Postville. My community of Postville has one single nurse. There's no other nurse in the community. There's no road access to the community. The only way you can actually get in and out of the community is by flying in. The problem with having one nurse in a community is that actually Postville does not have any RCMP, so I say again, if we had a huge crisis, such as a fire where many people were injured, or even a call-out in the middle of the night, that single nurse in a remote, isolated community is on her own.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a wonderful day out there. It's great to see the sunshine, and it has a little bit of heat in it, which is nice.

It's always a pleasure to speak in this hon. House, at any time, probably more so during COVID, because whoever is speaking gets an opportunity to take off their mask. If I can speak for longer for 20 minutes, I'll keep going. Anyway, it's quite the pleasure.

I want to start first by, of course, thanking the wonderful people of Topsail - Paradise for giving me another opportunity to represent them in this hon. House. I know they're probably getting sick of me at the door. Most people have talked about having an election in the winter but in the last two years, I've done three: a by-election in the winter, a general election and, of course, another general election in the winter.

Again, I'm always grateful that they put their faith in me and I'll do what I can for them. I'll always be available and I'll always listen to them. I'll always do my best and we may also disagree at times. I think that for all of us in this House of Assembly it goes the same way. We're here to represent the people of our districts; we're here to do our best.

To the theme that was mentioned earlier about when we talk about respect in this House, really, I'm not concerned about the respect for me; I'm concerned about the respect for the people I represent here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: I think we all feel that way. I think that in the heat of the moment, when we discuss things here, sometimes we do forget that.

Unlike the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, unfortunately, I wasn't here as he listed off – I had to step out for a minute – umpteen communities that he represents. That's wonderful. But my district represents two towns, two municipalities: Paradise and CBS. I will say those municipalities have it great. They have it great because each of those municipalities has three wonderful MHAs representing them.

In Paradise, of course, there's myself; we have the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island; and we have – I see her waving; I'm getting there, I left the best until last there – the Member for Mount Scio. Of course, in CBS – again, I represent part of CBS – you have the Member for Harbour Main, as well as the Member for CBS. These are two very lucky communities.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. DINN: Yeah he got his – for the minister responsible, I believe Route 60, in the Member for CBS's section, is done quite well. I'm hoping for the Route 60 through Topsail to get the same this year.

I just want to talk about these two communities. Paradise itself is celebrating its 50th anniversary of being incorporated this year and I believe CBS, maybe in two years' time, will have a similar celebration. These communities have been around a long time – a long time, like many of our communities. When you go back and you drive through these communities, they've certainly grown. You sort of lose sight of their history. Paradise, of course – woods product was one of their main industries and fishing and lobster being in CBS. They've come a long way to becoming incorporated.

In my district, I have quite an active seniors' community. I have many, many young families. There are four K-to-6 schools in my district. There is a K-to-4 school in my district. There is a new intermediate school that will be opening. Bordering that, which my district becomes a catchment area, there is a high school, another middle school and two more smaller schools, so a very, very young community. Again, I am very happy, very grateful and very honoured to be representing those in the communities.

I'd be remiss if I did not at least comment on the shocking news we heard this week of the bodies of 215 children buried near a residential school in Kamloops. I can't fathom it; I have no words to describe it. It is shocking; it has to be extremely sad for those families. The first thing when you see this you say this can't be happening. This is Canada. This is stuff you see on the news happening somewhere on the other side of the world.

Some of the comments that you hear on social media, like get over it, that was back in history – no, this is certainly not something you get over. This is something that we have to deal with, that we have to find solutions for, that we have to eliminate, eradicate and become a better community for it.

We must do better. When we talk about reconciliation, we have to make some real steps. There are some things we do that are token steps but I think we really have to make some real steps to get past this. You learn from your history. You can't just ignore it, you learn from your history. Good or bad or indifferent, you learn from that. That's what makes us a better people as we move forward. I hope and I pray that as we move forward, we will make this place a better place for anyone to come live, play and work.

I'm in a new role. When I was elected a couple of years ago, I was planted in as the critic or shadow minister for a department that I had been a part of for many years, so not a big shock to me to get in and do what I had to do there. This time around, I'm the critic or shadow minister for Health and Community Services, a big portfolio. I certainly appreciate the work that Minister Haggie and all of his staff, all of his people, have done.

I certainly applaud everybody that has played some part in helping us to bring COVID under control.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Everybody played a part there.

I'm glad to see that we're perhaps coming to somewhere close to normal. I think that for a lot of us, as politicians people will joke, oh, you're out kissing babies and cutting ribbons. Yes, that's probably part of it. We participate, we get out in the communities and that's what you have to do. As we move to a new state of normal, I'm hoping that we'll be able to do more of that.

I do want to say for the Minister of Health and Community Services I'll toss accolades where they're earned. Certainly, he has done a good job. In this House of Assembly, we talk about people answering questions when they're asked. I have to say, the minister on many times does provide an answer. Sometimes it may not be the answer I'm looking for, but he does present a knowledgeable answer. I appreciate him for that and for doing that.

Of course, he's gained a bit of notoriety through COVID. I looked at his Twitter handle, which is @Johnrockdoc, so he's a little bit of a rock star out there. But I look forward to moving forward in this as the critic, as the shadow minister for Health and Community Services. I think we will have some debates here; we will have some back and forth, but I think, as all of us here in this House of Assembly know, it's like going to Vegas: What happens in here, when we go outside, we should be able to be as cordial as we can with each other. This is a bit of theatre, and certainly we have to take it with a grain of salt.

When I was first elected, unlike when I was a deputy mayor out in Paradise, I remember a person who happens to be here in the House with us – her words to me when I came, she said – first words: Mr. Dinn, welcome to the life in the fishbowl. That's what it is when you're an elected official. You have to be watching your p's and q's and be on your toes.

I'll just make an observation. It's not a criticism. I'm not offering advice; it's an observation, because we did have some lengthy words said

yesterday when we talk about respect in this House of Assembly. We all say things that it's no sooner off the tip of your tongue that you wish you could pull it back. I'll just use an example. The Premier spoke there maybe last week, or just after the budget came down, and he made a comment in the news, in discussions around the university and funding. I think his comment was somewhere along the lines: The university has to decide what it wants to be when it grows up.

Potentially a harmless comment, but I got so many comments on that, so many words used to describe that – and, again, taking into consideration that there are people out there on social media who just live off this stuff. I guess it came across as disrespectful. Again, I'm not saying it was meant that way. This is the life we live in when we're in here. Whether it's the Premier or whether it's our leader, they're even looked at under a larger magnifying glass. You sort of take your lead from them.

I think everybody in this House is here for the right reason. I think we can all learn from the mistakes of all of us and make ourselves better in here, and be a bit more respectful on both sides and answer the questions to the best of your ability, and we will ask the questions as we are. That's our job, to do that.

An example today is when I asked the question on the sugar tax. Nowhere could I find in the budget or in the documentation, nowhere in there could I find how much revenue we were going to generate from the sugar tax. So I asked the question and, of course, the Minister of Finance was quick in her response of \$9 million.

We don't always ask questions to get people caught up in the wrong answer; we ask them on behalf of the people we represent. Sometimes, yes, you're trying to trip up the person; other times it's a straightforward answer. I did have a sidebar with the minister afterwards and she's going to find it for me. I think it was – I don't want to use words that she didn't use – but, essentially, it's in taxation somewhere. I'm hoping to see that uncovered.

That's information that, you know, when you put out a budget you want to see the details and you want to see the analysis. I do appreciate that

that particular sugar tax is not coming into effect for another year, so there will be lots of time to discuss that. But you do get those questions and you do want to know: How much are we getting? Where is it going? Where are the details? Some of the information we get, for example, from the Premier's report, I think this budget as well, is not as heavy in details and analysis as I would like to see. Hopefully, we'll get past that.

I can say I am fully encouraged by the work that's being done for the Health Accord NL. Our caucus had an opportunity to take in a presentation from Dr. Parfrey and Sister Elizabeth Davis in the past week. Two fabulous people, two people who know what they're talking about and they're going to come out and, hopefully, we'll see a final report in December. But I was totally encouraged, fully encouraged by the approach they're taking and I'm certainly looking forward to seeing some more detail come out from that report.

The Premier's economic report – well, I'll say it like it is – is very much lacking in detail. But I'm confident with the Health Accord that we'll get some firmer detail, rather than what we got in the Premier's report that we're going to cut regional services by 25 per cent or \$25 million – whatever the figure was. I'm hoping to see more detail come through as we go along there, but I'm looking forward to that.

The other thing with the Health Accord is it mentions the words "health outcomes" so many times, which is so good to see because we tend to react as opposed to be proactive when it comes to issues; it talks about outcomes. The sugar tax certainly addresses a big issue here in Newfoundland and Labrador: diabetes. I see where the sugar tax is going there. I don't know if I'm fully convinced that it's the way. It's probably not a standalone that we can use. It needs other items put in there. I look at the insulin pumps, the expanded Insulin Pump Program, which is something we lobbied for, for the last couple of years, which government brought in last year, brought in in the budget, which they brought in again this year. Good stuff. But we need to be taking it a little bit further.

I presented in this House or asked a question in this House in November past: What are we doing to look at continuous glucose monitors? What are we doing to look at flash monitors? I asked it again in December. I'm still waiting for the minister to get back with some information on that, but the benefits of that are fabulous.

I met with, via Zoom, some medical students who presented on the diabetic foot supports and what that can do. Maybe we need to invest in there. They put out a little report. I'm just going to read from it. This is our future. These are our future students, our future health care students speaking to us. I guarantee you they're smart – I was going to say kids, they're young adults. To me, anyone younger than me is considered a kid or at least 10 years younger.

This is something that we can learn. When I talk about the sugar tax and we look at how much we're going to save or how is it going to help us down the road, that's the analysis we look for; getting that 20 cents off a litre, where's it going? What's going to be our results?

I just want to read out of this report that the students presented. It was done at the Faculty of Medicine. It's talking about the foot supports that help prevent amputations. It's Diabetes Canada information. It says: "Newfoundland and Labrador currently incurs **\$16-18 million annually in direct costs** associated with diabetic foot ulcers ... as well as an additional **\$2-3 million annually in indirect costs**" That's big dollars. You're talking \$18 million to \$21 million.

"The **estimated cost for a single amputation**" – a single amputation – "**is \$74,000**" That's taking people, active people out of the workforce and costing for more people to look after them. We need to keep the people working, we need to keep people active. I think there is the start of steps that way.

I just go on here. "Diabetes Canada estimates that a provincial offloading device program in Newfoundland and Labrador would **cost between \$1.0-\$1.6 million annually.**" Considering the cost, a small investment for a bigger return. "However, such a program is expected to result in **gross direct cost savings of \$5.7-\$6.1 million annually.**"

When we ask questions in the House of Assembly this is the kind of information we're looking for. We don't want to get right down in the weeds, how it's going – but what's the preliminary analysis of bringing in a sugar tax? What's it going to save us? What's it going to do for our economy? What's it going to do for our people? Of course, there was a report done back in 2017 by the University of Waterloo that talks in generalities about sugar taxes.

Going forward – and we're going to have more time to talk about the budget – I would hope that we would focus on a little bit more detail and we'll all be the better for it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

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

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

I'd just like to remind everyone that's on the Social Services Committee, we'll be meeting at 6 p.m. this afternoon to discuss the Estimates of the Department of Education.

This House does now stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

Have a great weekend, everyone.

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