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*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

Order, please!

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today, we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Mount Pearl North, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Lake Melville, Exploits and Cape St. Francis.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - North.

Sorry, the hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I sit in this hon. House today to recognize a very close friend of mine who exemplifies how important immigration is to our province. Jibin Jose grew up in Kerala, India prior to moving to Canada in 2011.

In India, Jibin studied nursing and today works in the emergency room at the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre in Grand Falls-Windsor. The skills and dedication he brings to his job each and every day are most welcome by both his colleagues and his patients.

Proud residents of Grand Falls-Windsor, Jibin, his wife and their four-year-old son, now call Newfoundland and Labrador home. When he is not working, Jibin enjoys hunting, fishing and spending time with his family, as well as being very active throughout our community.

When asked what he loves most about Newfoundland and Labrador, Jibin simply replies: I love how friendly this province is and how welcoming people truly are, that's what makes it my home away from home.

Though he misses his family and friends back in India, we are so fortunate to have skilled people like Jibin and so many others like him.

Thank you for calling Newfoundland and Labrador your home, my friend. We are definitely open for business.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** My apologies to the Member for Mount Pearl - North.

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

I think you were looking for my opponent over on the opposite side, but I'm right here on the government side, just to let you know.

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

**L. STOYLES:** And very proud to be here on the government side.

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

**L. STOYLES:** I rise in the House today to recognize an award-winning author in my district who has successfully published her second award-winning novel, titled *Alone on the Trail*. It's the story that reviewers say will "make you think twice before wandering, unprepared, into the Newfoundland wilderness."

Emily Hepditch is one of this province's newest and brightest authors, having already published her first novel, titled *The Woman in the Attic*, in 2020. Her first venture in writing quickly became a number-one bestseller among local-interest books in Newfoundland and Labrador, and remained on the *Atlantic Books Today* top five local bestsellers list for nine consecutive months.

Her first novel was the winner of the NL Reads competition for 2021, and was also long-listed for the BMO Winterset Award.

What is more remarkable is that Ms. Hepditch is a former student of O'Donel High School in Mount Pearl, and a graduate of Memorial University, where she studied linguistics, criminology and psychology. When she is not writing, she's studying law.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulating one of this province's aspiring authors, and wish her every success in the future.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Lake Melville

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

History was made in Labrador last week when Stacy Ryan, the respected staff solicitor of the Legal Aid Commission in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, became a judge of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Madam Justice Ryan is the first Inuk woman to hold this position and the first woman from Labrador to become a justice. Born and raised in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, she attended law school in New Brunswick as a single young mother setting out on a challenging journey.

She recently revealed: "I have worked very hard and a lot of things didn't come easy but perseverance certainly does pay off. In some ways I am glad it was difficult because I appreciate it more."

Justice Ryan volunteered with the Board of Governors with the College of the North Atlantic, as coordinator of the Jackrabbit Cross Country Ski Program, with the board of trustees responsible for Labrador-Grenfell Health, on the board of directors for the Mokami Status of Women Council and on the Labrador Regional Appeal Board.

I ask all Members of this House of Assembly to congratulate Justice Ryan on her perseverance, her appointment and the role she will play inspiring future generations in Labrador.

Thank you.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Chelsea Thompson of Northern Arm is a Grade 6 student of Memorial Academy in Botwood. Chelsea entered the Royal Canadian Legion Remembrance Day Essay Contest, which takes place every year and won first place in her region.

Chelsea's essay was about a Newfoundland dog named Gander that served in World War II and was killed in action. Chelsea's essay was automatically sent to the provincial level and she placed first in the provincials. Her essay was then entered into the national contest, and she received the exciting news that she had won first place nationally with her essay.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members in the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Ms. Chelsea Thompson of Northern Arm on winning first place regionally, provincially and nationally in the Remembrance Day Essay Contest with the Royal Canadian Legion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Mr. Speaker, today I recognize both Lions Clubs in my district: Pouch Cove Lions Club was formed in 1982, has 28 members and serves the surrounding communities of Flat Rock and Bauline. Torbay Lions Club was formed 2015 and has 15 members.

Both clubs follow the motto "We Serve," and that's certainly being done. From offering financial assistance and ongoing food drives to our local food bank, to hosting seniors take-out dinners, partnering in community cleanups, supporting the Janeway, Easter Seals, School Lunch Association, Santa Claus parades and annual sponsorships to our local schools.

Recognizing the importance of community engagement, Torbay Lions hosted a seniors' yoga event and an online youth talent contest. Pouch Cove Lions are partnering with surrounding towns and Cape St Francis Elementary school to plant trees as part of their centennial project to commemorate 100 years of Lions service to Canada.

Both clubs sponsor the national Recycle for Sight Program, which supports optical missions around the world. Lions are certainly busy with their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking the Pouch Cove and Torbay Lions Clubs for their dedication and service to the constituents of Cape St. Francis.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

**Statements by Ministers**

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

**G. BYRNE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I ask that all Members of this hon. House join me and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in condemning the horrific attack that took place Sunday in London, Ontario and the Islamophobia it clearly represents.

This was an attack on the Muslim community, an attack which took the lives of a grandmother, a mother, a father and a daughter, leaving a young son with serious injuries. It was an attack of cowardice and of evil.

Our hearts are with the Muslim community and our thoughts and prayers are with the families and loved ones hurt by this terrible act of hate and horror.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Muslim community is rightfully worried about their safety and their place in the community. I wish to reassure that you are valued, respected and supported during this difficult time. The province stands with you. This morning I reached out to Dr. Mansoor Pirzada, President of the Muslim Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, to offer both my personal and our governments condolences to the family and to the larger Muslim family.

This tragedy is a stark reminder of the danger and the horror caused by discrimination in its

most brutal form. Work on establishing a ministerial Committee on anti-racism that will include the Ministers of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills; Justice and Public Safety; and Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, has already begun.

Recognizing the systemic, persistent nature of racism, the Committee will be seeking input from residents, from community organizations, from employers, from educators, from researchers and many others on their experiences, so we can develop tools to end racism in all of its forms.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the Canada we stand for. Violence has no place here. We must do better. We stand against racism.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Official Opposition, I join with the minister in expressing my condolences and deepest sympathies to the Afzaal family and Muslim community in London, Ontario.

Sunday evening's attack was a hateful crime perpetrated against a Canadian family. To be honest, Mr. Speaker, I was personally upset to hear this tragic and brutal act of hatred. No one deserves to be targeted of such violence.

While my thoughts are with the community and the family who are most impacted by this act, I also wish to take this opportunity to condemn Islamophobia in all forms that it takes on.

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'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I join with him and the Official Opposition in condemning this horrific attack on Sunday in London, Ontario. It was a heinous crime, motivated by heinous beliefs; I would even go so far as to call it an act of terrorism.

Although this tragedy did not happen here, I'm sadly all too aware of the fact that Islamophobia exists here, too. To the Muslims of Newfoundland and Labrador, I say that you are not alone and you are an integral part of our communities.

I call on our fellow Members of this House and all people of our province to stand up to hate and call it out wherever and whenever you see it. Let's live by our values here in Newfoundland and Labrador and truly make this a welcoming place for all.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**S. STOODLEY:** Mr. Speaker, too often people in our province are seriously injured or killed because of irresponsible behaviour on our roadways. In many cases, this irresponsible behaviour leads to the unimaginable loss or injury of a parent, child, sibling, friend or neighbour. Whatever the relationship, individuals and families must live with the loss or suffering of their loved ones. Even more tragic is the fact that many of these incidents are preventable.

Words cannot express their devastation, and I commend people like Gail Thorne and her STAND for Hannah Foundation in their efforts to spread their road safety message, despite their suffering. I recently watched the powerful documentary about Gail's daughter, Hannah, and it had a profound impact on me and I offer my condolences.

As minister of the department responsible for the *Highway Traffic Act*, I feel strongly that we must keep these stories front and centre in our hearts and minds every day. Groups like STAND for Hannah have lobbied government to strengthen legislation to deter street racing and speeding on our highways. Their efforts culminated with Bill 27 in 2017 which strengthened the act, introducing infractions such as excessive speeding, street racing and stunting.

Mr. Speaker, I was struck by a line Gail said in the documentary that sums up all of our responsibilities as road users: "Always obey the rules." If we all live by that simple message, we would have fewer incidents on our highways and people like Gail Thorne and her family would not have to live with such overwhelming loss.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. On behalf of the Opposition, I'd like to take this opportunity to express my condolences to the family and friends of Hannah Thorne. I also wish to commend and support the STAND for Hannah Foundation and Gail Thorne on their ongoing advocacy work. I have no doubt that their efforts are making our roads a safer place for all drivers, pedestrians and road users.

Mr. Speaker, this emotional and commanding documentary is available for public viewing online and free of charge. I encourage residents of this province to watch it and to truly reflect on how we can make all our roads safer. We truly can stand together against negligent driving.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. I would like to thank the people behind STAND for Hannah and any other lobby group that advocates for more awareness on public safety issues.

When we go out on the road, we sign a social contract promising to take responsibility for our own safety and the safety of everyone we share the road with. It's up to all of us to ensure everyone makes it home safely for dinner at night.

The Third Party caucus calls upon all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to remember our responsibility for the safety of the people we share the road with. We call upon the government to continue to ensure our roads are safe, properly maintained and enforcement of all traffic issues.

Thank you so much.

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

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Education.

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in this hon. House to extend congratulations to the 12 students who represented our province at the 2021 Virtual Canada-Wide Science Fair hosted by Carlton University from May 17 to 21.

The students who participated in the national science fair were selected from two Husky Energy Newfoundland Science and Technology Fairs, held in April.

The first fair was held for students in Labrador, Western and Central Newfoundland regions, and saw the selection of Grace Tuglavina from Lake Melville School in North West River; Amy Gillard from St. Stephen's All Grade in Rencontre East, as well as Hannah Babstock, Miya Burden, Cassie Saunders, and Ethan Woodfine, all students at Holy Cross School in Eastport.

The Eastern Science and Technology Fair saw the selection of Holy Heart students Livi Allen, John Hiscock and Nicholas Qiu, Holy Spirit student Caleb Tibbs, as well as Orpa Hawlader and Dipayan Sutra Dhar from MacDonald Drive Junior High.

Mr. Speaker, the national virtual science fair included 374 projects from junior and senior high students from across the country, including all provinces and territories. Livi Allen, Orpa Hawlader and Nicholas Qui each won bronze at this competition.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the 12 students of the 2021 Science Team Newfoundland and Labrador. The students represented the province with pride and are to be commended for their hard work and perseverance in successfully completing a science project during these challenging times.

Thank you.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement.

All of us on this side of the House join the hon. minister in congratulating these 12 students who represented Newfoundland and Labrador at the 2021 Virtual Canada-Wide Science Fair.

Mr. Speaker, these bright students are to be commended for their hard work and dedication during a difficult COVID school year. Even to make it to a national event is noteworthy. Their determination and creativity, no doubt with support from parents at home and from their teachers, helped these young people shine on the national stage.

Congratulations to all participating, and a special hats off to the three bronze medal winners.

One final special mention, Mr. Speaker, of Caleb Tibbs, who is from Holy Spirit, which is in my district.

Thank you very much.

**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 an advance copy of his statement and join him in recognizing the students of the 2021 Science Team NL for their accomplishments at the Canada-Wide Science Fair.

It's an exceptional achievement by our secondary students, and the Third Party would like to extend our congratulations to all those who participated as a member of the team.

Certainly, as a former educator, this is significant and it means something personally to me. These students are a great example of the bright and budding minds in this province. To them, as well to all of our students, I say keep going; keep up the good work. Build on your achievements. You are the up-and-coming innovators and our future as a province looks all the brighter for your efforts.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the prime minister once again offered platitudes without any details of specifics on the ongoing negotiations surrounding the Muskrat Falls Project. The Premier claims he is being transparent, but has yet to offer any update on details of the negotiations since he appointed his friend to lead them.

I ask the Premier: Are the Muskrat Falls rate mitigation negotiations tied to the so-called Atlantic Loop project?

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

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

As we've said many times, we have been open and transparent about the status of the negotiations; they are ongoing. We have provided updates, including the update in December with the announcement of the two negotiating teams, including almost a billion dollars of relief at that time, Mr. Speaker, for a project that was mismanaged by the Members opposite.

We're continuing to have ongoing negotiations and we will provide updates when updates are ready. They're just not ready just yet, Mr. Speaker, and it wouldn't be in the commercial best interests of the province to begin negotiating in public at a Tim Hortons or across the aisle here in this House of Assembly at this particular moment in time.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the Premier that the operations and the management of the build of Muskrat Falls were under the Liberal regime.

Mr. Speaker, the Greene report recommended the bundling of assets of the Churchill River for sale. The prime minister clearly tied the rate mitigation negotiations to the Atlantic Loop in his speech.

I ask the Premier: Does rate mitigation mean a giveaway of our Churchill River assets?

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

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

As I've said many times, there will be no giveaways. This is an incredibly valuable asset for the people of this province. We've already learned during two hydroelectric projects that we can't rush it. We need to make sure that we're responsible, we're prudent and everything that we do is in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. There will be no giveaways.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The prime minister would only say we're going to be there when speaking about the province's fiscal situation. Again, platitudes without details.

I ask the Premier: Has Ottawa offered any direct financial support to relieve the debt burden of the province, or are we walking the path alone?

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

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

As the Member opposite should know, the prime minister and this federal Liberal government have been there for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. If he needs reminding let me just provide some numbers for him as to how the federal government has been there during COVID-19: \$152 million for Safe Restart; \$26 million for Safe Return to Class; \$2 million for sports participation; \$320 million for oil and gas funding; \$53 million for COVID contingency for essential workers; \$600 million for Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy; \$450 million for Canada Emergency Business Account; \$10 million for Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance; \$4 million for Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy; \$500 million for the Canada Recovery Benefit, the CRB; \$31 million for Canada Emergency Student Benefit; \$83 million for extra GST credit; \$23 million for enhanced CCB.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Your time has expired.

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

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll remind the Premier, let's also add in another number: Six years of no equalization and \$10 billion lost to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, airline prices across the country are cheap and affordable –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**D. BRAZIL:** – in every province but Newfoundland and Labrador. The prime minister suggested yesterday that the price would go down but offered no details on how the federal government would help.

I ask the Premier: What supports have the federal government offered to ensure flights to and from Newfoundland and Labrador are comparable to the rest of the country to make sure we aren't left behind when the borders open?

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

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

I can tell you even before the prime minister highlighted it yesterday, it's something that we've been following very closely on this side of the House because this is a very important question.

I had a conversation earlier this morning with Air Canada. I expressed our concerns. They're going to go back and review it. Our officials are following up again either later today or



tomorrow. It's something that we will monitor on an ongoing basis.

It was good to see the prime minister notice it and pay attention to it, Mr. Speaker, but it was on my radar certainly before yesterday lunchtime.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Air access is vital to ensure our economy recovers as the pandemic draws to a conclusion. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are sick of platitudes. It's time for action.

I ask the Premier: Can the province expect direct help on airline prices from the federal government or are we yet again being left behind the rest of the country?

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, we've been having those conversations. We're emerging from a pandemic. Just last week, we launched our reopening plan. That plan has been met with much enthusiasm. We know that one of the areas of success to make that plan work will be air access. We are monitoring it on a daily basis. We are talking to our airport authorities.

It was really good over the weekend to already see flights being re-added to Gander; a direct flight four times a week from Toronto. We seen good news yesterday on NAV CANADA and their operations in Gander.

Mr. Speaker, we're now seeing Air Canada, as we move into the reopening plan, with four direct flights a day to and from Toronto, which is the centre of our hub.

Mr. Speaker, we will monitor rates as well and continue those conversations with our major airlines.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to point out a couple of schedules. The Finance Minister's Budget Speech notes that spending will have to be cut by \$300 million in order to return the province to surplus. The Premier's Greene report argues that cuts of almost \$1 billion are needed.

I ask the Minister: Can you explain the difference? Which document is correct?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know. I don't have it before me, the documents to which he refers. If he's happy to deliver those documents to me or table them in the House of Assembly, I'll certainly have a look at them to see how he's confused between the two documents.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, we are on a path towards having a balanced –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** – budget by the '25-'26 year.

Mr. Speaker, we are taking a prudent, responsible approach. In fact, Mr. Speaker, yesterday, when I was speaking with the banking syndicate they noted the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, I think the confusion is on that side. One of the documents is her own Budget Speech; the other is the Premier's Greene report, which she's charged with implementing. So I think the confusion lies – just simply pick up your reports and look at the numbers. The scary part in this, though, is in order to balance the budget the minister's own documents, again, note that revenue will have to increase by \$1.3 billion.

Minister, please be honest and transparent with the people of the province and tell us what tax increases are planning in the coming years. How much more will people have to pay to live here?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thought that was rather disparaging at the beginning of his discourse, Mr. Speaker. I will say that I'm very familiar with the speech that I gave in this House last week and I'm very familiar with the Greene report, but I will say he's, yet again, got it wrong. In the statement of operations forecast, revenue, for example, in '21-'22 is \$8.5 billion.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** Revenue is expected to be \$8.3 billion in '25-'26. I'm not sure to which numbers he's referring. That's actually decline, not an increase.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, if we look at our 2021 revised number, that's where I'm comparing it to, so there is no confusion. The only problem we have here is I'm not sure if the minister is prepared to tell the people of the province exactly what they're planning on doing. We know in 2016 that they introduced a budget that was heavily on taxes and little less than nothing on reducing expenditures.

Again, I ask the minister: Are there any planned future tax increases in the forecast?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is unfortunate the Member opposite keeps getting it wrong, but I will say to the Member opposite: No, there are no additional increases in taxation. That's not the way a budget forecast works. We are not showing any increases in taxation besides the ones that were announced in the budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** So, again, Minister, it's good to hear that there are no increases planned, but I don't think that we have it wrong. I'm a little confused that they don't really know what they have planned.

Before the mistakes of 2016 are repeated and taxes and fees are increased, an analysis should be done of all current taxes and fees, the revenue collected and the cost to administer them.

I ask the minister: Will you do a cost-benefit analysis of all taxes and fees and eliminate any that are ineffective and table the results here in the House?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will say to the Member opposite that I did announce in the budget – he would've noticed it in the speech, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker – that we would have a continuing improvement process, a review of expenditures, a program review, as well as an accountability framework built into the Treasury Board. All programs within this government – all services, all programs, all taxation will be reviewed.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Mr. Speaker, the number one complaint from constituents is the lengthy waiting period in dealing with Crown Lands. In some cases, people have been tied up for years. It is not always their fault, as the minister suggests.

I ask the minister: What are you doing to prevent these applicants from ending up in limbo for months and years?

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I guess it's a bit of a privilege today to be the number one complaint for the province to be Crown Lands after just bringing down a budget, Mr. Speaker. If the number one problem is Crown Lands, I look forward to fixing the problem for the Premier.

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

**D. BRAGG:** As I said before, there are numerous reasons why sometimes an application would take a long time. A lot of times there are family conflicts, there are land conflicts: there are a whole slew of issues. I wish sometimes we would just look at some of the ones we do get done on time and there are a lot of these. That's the ones you don't hear about, but the ones that take time.

We're more than willing to make an offer to the Member opposite, as I've done before, to help work on some of these situations and some of these files because some are complicated, Mr. Speaker, too complicated to talk about in this House to be honest.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Mr. Speaker, it is the number one issue in my district probably.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**P. FORSEY:** If they did streamline Crown Lands, Mr. Speaker, they would certainly increase the revenue for government. The toll-free line was supposed to increase access to Crown Lands; however, from our constituents, feedback seems to be achieving – this is the opposite.

Now that we are starting to relax restrictions in other areas, what steps is the minister taking in reopening personal service at department of Crown Lands?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

The reopening plan for Crown Lands is much like any other government offices. We're going forward; there is a plan in place. But our 1-800 number – and we also found out through this, this is the best way to deal with a lot of the complaints. A lot of it is done faster, more efficient.

I encourage people to continue using our 1-800 number because that is the people who always have the information at their fingertips, Mr. Speaker. We will be reopening and the plan, as you know it, as COVID progresses, will be similar to any other department in this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Efficiency was certainly up, Minister.

Can we get an update, Minister, on the status of backlog so as to have a definite number of how many people are currently affected by delays?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

That will be a question that I don't have the answer readily at my fingertips, but I do know over the last year to two years we have worked so hard. We have decreased it, I'm going to say by about 75 per cent, but the actual number of files that are still ongoing that would be considered delayed, I would have to find out that information and report back to this House at a later date.

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

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

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

In 2017, this House supported a private Member's motion to implement pay equity legislation. Four years later, Newfoundland and Labrador is the only Atlantic province without such legislation.

When will the minister bring forward the necessary legislation, which once and for all will treat men and women equally in our province?

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

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

Well, certainly, pay equity is a primary conversation since I've come into this department. I will say that extensive work has been done for years and years prior to this government taking office. It's certainly not a new issue.

That said, we're committed to working collaboratively with departments such as the Department of Labour and all Members to do

what we can to make change happen as soon as we can within our fiscal reality.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, I suggest to the minister that this is not a difficult question; legislation should be debated immediately.

Will the minister bring in pay equity legislation in 2021, yes or no?

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

**P. PARSONS:** I would like to remind the hon. Member, Mr. Speaker, that the department of Women and Gender Equality doesn't have the authoritative legislation to implement that in the House. It will take collaborative work among government.

That said, we are certainly committed to doing everything that we can within our fiscal reality. I will remind the Member, payments such as the \$600 million that we will need for rate mitigation, certainly could have gone a long way to help programs such as pay equity and other much-needed resources and programs that we need in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**P. PARSONS:** But make no mistake we are certainly committed to doing everything we can, Mr. Speaker. I also want to remind this hon. House that it was this Premier who made it mandatory to put a GBA-plus lens on every program and policy that is produced out of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. We certainly are committed to doing everything that we can.

Thank you.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, it's very concerning now when I hear that the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality doesn't have the authority to lead the way with respect to pay equity legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the chief of the RNC has announced his retirement. We are also aware that at least three other members of the RNC executive leadership team have decided to leave the force. In a recent non-confidence vote, 90 per cent of RNC officers expressed discontent with RNC leadership.

I ask the minister: Is he concerned about the lack of confidence and evidence of conflict in the leadership of our provincial police force?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

She is correct that the chief of the RNC is going to be retiring. In my short time here in the minister's seat, I have the utmost faith in every officer at the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and every officer at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as well. Of course there are people leaving positions. That's called retirement and people moving on and making decisions in life. I support all those individuals at the RNC who are making those decisions.

I can assure the Member opposite that the process is in place to do a national search for a new chief of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary here in this province. I look forward to hiring that person when the time comes. I'm sure they will do a great job.

Thank you.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Again, Mr. Speaker, it's concerning that the minister doesn't see these signs as evidence of a tumultuous workplace.

According to a briefing note, there are about 400 RNC officers with over 30 eligible to retire. With only 14 recruit constables, the current RNC chief decided to cancel the 2021 Cadet Training course.

I ask the minister: Does he support this decision?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you for the question.

The short answer is I support any decision to make sure people are safe to avoid contracting COVID during the pandemic.

I do want to note, too, that in regard to situations involving the RNC or any situations where there are complaints, there is a public complaint process which works very well. It's independent of the RNC. If any individuals in the public do have issues with any officer, they can make a complaint publicly. It's not dealt with by the RNC; it's dealt with individuals. It's a civilian-led process. I think it works quite well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the issue of recruit constables and the low numbers that are present, I ask the minister again: In Estimates last year, the chief of the RNC spoke about the need to continue training RNC cadets through the pandemic.

Will cadet training resume?

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

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

I'm sure the RNC has ongoing training all the time.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Yes, I'm sure it's part of safety and a process and a priority for the RNC to make sure that individuals who move up through the ranks are well trained so they can do their jobs.

I, again, just want to confirm for everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador that I have no doubt that the RNC is doing its job to make sure every Newfoundlander and Labradorian is safe in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Sadly news just broke of another ATV death in our province, this time a 30 year-old man in Hopedale. Mr. Speaker, our thoughts and prayers go out to friends and family of the individual.

Tragically, 17 people died in our province on ATVs or snowmobiles in 2020. Government promised new legislation three years ago, we have two elections since then, a revolving door of ministers and repeated sounds of consultations.

Will the minister finally bring in new legislation in this session?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly do want to send my condolences to the family and friends to the gentleman in Hopedale who tragically lost his life this morning in an ATV accident.

ATV safety and off-road safety is incredibly important, it's in my mandate letter. We have done a comprehensive review of our legislation

– comprehensive – that is complete. The proposed legislation is working its way through the process; it is incredibly important to this government.

I look forward to bringing it forward to the House at a future date and I look forward to the Opposition Members support in that legislation to increase safety for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

We certainly look forward to that legislation come it, it is due time that gets done.

Mr. Speaker, we have the highest fatality rate in Atlantic Canada. The minister said in the last session of the House said it would be soon, and she said in the media on May 20: Newfoundland and Labrador regulations were outdated and "it does put a sense of urgency on any changes that we do have to make."

Mr. Speaker, how many more fatalities have to happen in this province before this legislation gets done?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ATV and snowmobile safety is incredibly important, I remind the Member opposite and all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador that safety is everyone's responsibility. It's important that everyone takes precautions, they operate vehicles according to the manufacturer's specifications and they take all safety precautions necessary.

I do look forward to bringing legislation forward to this House at a future date to improve safety of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm continuing to hear from municipalities who are struggling from increased tender bids as a result of skyrocketing costs, such as lumber, and they are unable to move ahead with critical infrastructure projects.

I ask the minister: How does she plan to address this ongoing issue?

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

**E. LOVELESS:** I'll have to apologize, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear his question so if he could – I know it was infrastructure related but if you would repeat that question I would appreciate that.

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

**J. WALL:** Municipalities are struggling with increased tender bids as a result of skyrocketing costs, such as lumber, and are unable to move ahead with the critical infrastructure projects that they have.

How does the minister plan on addressing this issue?

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

**E. LOVELESS:** We have many programs within the infrastructure program where municipalities are involved. I finalized that process and we're moving along with those projects that are important to the towns.

I realize the challenge around the lumber prices, but I can't give an answer to say that I'm going to reduce the lumber prices today, but it's a conversation that needs to be had.

In terms of projects overall, we're moving along with tenders and work is getting done within towns of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**J. WALL:** Mr. Speaker, I asked about this important topic earlier in the House and the minister replied by saying, and I quote: "In the event that these things do arise, I'm sure there are conditions that we can address and look at to see that they are reached in a manner that's appropriate for communities who need special assistance."

Will the minister commit to providing assistance to these municipalities so they can move ahead with their critical infrastructure projects?

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

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to speak to that and let communities know that we are doing what we can in our department with our Special Assistance Grants. There's a process by which communities can apply and we discuss the merits of the request and determine on a needs basis, a lot of the times, what it is that we can do as a government to assist these communities, to make sure that things are happening in a manner that's appropriate for individuals, residents and towns to make that their services are maintained and that people have access to the things that they need in their community.

I do welcome communities to send their applications to our Special Assistance Grants Program and we'll move forward on those.

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

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

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

Yesterday, in this House, the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology was asked what the government would do to ensure that Newfoundland Power's shareholders' cash grab of \$30 million didn't fall on the backs of ratepayers. The minister's response yesterday to my question about the rate increase application highlights the problem with privatization. The

fact is that government is powerless to protect its citizens from corporate greed.

Now, if we accept this I have to ask: How is this government going to maintain their commitment to keep energy prices where they are after Muskrat Falls comes online if they are powerless to stop rate increases now?

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

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the question, but I would also appreciate the Member that if he's going to put words in my mouth, please, at least be accurate and refer to the *Hansard* rather than to use words that I simply did not say.

Now, there are a couple of different issues at play here: one is the rate mitigation file that we're dealing with and the other one is the general rate application from Newfoundland Power. I'll deal with the general rate application here.

There is a process in place involving the Public Utilities Board, a quasi-judicial board that will hear evidence on both sides. What I would point out to the Member opposite is that we have a Consumer Advocate who is presenting their side – representing the side of consumers.

As a government, we must watch the process unfold to see what comes from this. We simply will not jump into a quasi-judicial matter but, obviously, power rates are something that is top of mind for us every single day.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I'd certainly remind the minister I never referred to anything that he said, just a general summary here.

If the fiscal plan involves provincial government services being offered by private sector for-profit businesses, what measures will government take to ensure that the people of our province do not fall victim to excessive price increases or a reduction of services as the result of businesses attempting to increase their profit margins?

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

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure what the Member is suggesting, that we should jump in here and use the power of the Legislature or government to determine what these companies can and cannot do. Sometimes it sounds great in theory – we would love to be able to do that – but the reality is that doing something of that nature would have multiple repercussions across multiple departments and the entire community that I don't think they have contemplated.

What I can say is that we have a process in place. Nobody likes the idea of power rate increases, but there is a process. It is top of mind for us; we continually spend a good portion of every single day dealing with power rates; a lot of times the issue that was not created by us but is certainly left to us to clean up.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Would the Premier identify, then, what provincial government services will be privatized or considered for, as it's called, joint solutions? Or are we supposed to keep talking – taking that everything is on the table as an acceptable answer?

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

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



The Budget Speech itself listed off services such as ferries, registries and facilities management. Mr. Speaker, we are looking for solutions from industry, from unions, from co-ops, from social enterprises in how better to deliver that service at a more reasonable cost.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to go out and ask for people to come forward with their solutions and organizations to come forward with their solutions, and we'll consider, once we have that information, as to how we best move forward from there.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot in the government itself about the ways to cut savings and cut costs. Across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, under the infrastructure of Transportation and works, there are a lot of buildings that aren't being used. Even if you pass them on to the communities, it would save a lot of savings in rent and heat and light.

I ask the minister: Have you done an infrastructure – any type of reading of how many buildings are in this province that aren't being used, the cost of the buildings and how much are we paying for upkeep of these buildings?

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Happy to answer that.

Yes, we have and we're continuing on with that analysis.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, now that you have all the buildings in place that you feel can be sold off or can be given to a community to help benefit a community will you table that in the House of Assembly? So we all would know

what benefits they could be to the communities, what we can help with towns itself who are in desperate need of infrastructure, who are in desperate need of recreation facilities and who are in desperate need for buildings, say, for fire departments that can be refurbished to a fire department.

Would the minister table that information, which he just said he has, in the House of Assembly?

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

**E. LOVELESS:** I guess my previous answer was there's analysis that's been done and is continuing to be done. Once I've done my due diligence, I don't see a reason why I can't provide that information to the hon. Member.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### Tabling of Documents

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

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

Pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I'm tabling three orders-in-council relating to funding pre-commitment for fiscal years '22-'23 to '26-'27.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Any other tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 10, 2021.

**SPEAKER:** Any other 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 Public Utilities Board has approved a licence for an ambulance owner to operate in the area from Bay Bulls to Bauline. This area is one of the fastest growing areas of the province; there have been many concerns from residents, municipalities, councils and emergency responders regarding response times.

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 support the position of this service provider and ensure that residents of the Ferryland District meet national standards for response times.

Mr. Speaker, I live in an area that we have a person that's looking to provide an ambulance service. In the District of Ferryland, I know the area where I live in order to get an ambulance, it has to come from Cape Broyle, which would be on a good day, I'm going to say, 20-25 minutes, and that would be the best response time. Coming from St. John's, it would be, I'm going to say, a half-hour, 35-minute response time.

With somebody looking to provide this service there, I think it would be essential of the government to be able to look at that and provide that service. We have a great volunteer fire department that responds to the calls and takes care of some of the people that are in

distress at certain times, so it's something that we would love to see in our area. It would certainly help our wait times.

I know it happens, but we have instances of an hour and a half or two hours for people waiting for an ambulance. I just think that something should be done to consider this and look at these ambulance responses.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

**P. TRIMPER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a very interesting petition here today.

The Labrador husky is a unique and hardy breed of working dog. It is believed this breed evolved from the first domesticated dog brought by the Thule Inuit to Labrador in the 1300s. Interbreeding with wild wolves resulted in a superior and well-adapted sled dog for hundreds of years in Labrador. Instead of speed, the Labrador husky is well known for extremely high levels of endurance.

The Labrador husky served as an invaluable asset to the people of Labrador until the advent of the snowmobile, aiding in communication and transportation. Today, this breed continues to be popular as pets and/or as recreational sled dogs.

For the last number of years, a dedicated group of Labrador husky enthusiasts – including breeders and owners – has been compiling historical and present-day information on the Labrador husky to promote provincial awareness and recognition of its unique genetic composition, similar to that of the Newfoundland pony. These volunteers have been working with partners such as the NunatuKavut Community Council, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador and many others, over the last five years to build this case for special recognition.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon this House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to designate the

Labrador husky as a heritage status animal for its unique genetic makeup and its important contribution to the culture and history of Labrador and other Northern regions.

Mr. Speaker, if anyone's had a chance to ever visit Labrador and see some of the dogs and the sled teams that are making a bit of a revival, it's truly a unique breed. It's actually quite large. As I said, it tends to be slower, but it's tough, it's strong and it's known for its endurance.

As part of the prep for this, I reached out to the team and have been working closely with them. We understand we have about 51 Labrador huskies known at this time, so this is becoming a bit of a dire situation and we feel this status could really help us a lot.

I did also reach out to Mr. Jack Harris, who in this very room back in June of 1994 introduced a private Member's resolution calling upon the House to establish what became known as the *Heritage Animals Act* and the Newfoundland pony was entered into that structure.

So we'd like to follow along on a similar heel, and I'm hoping government would be willing to sit down with the volunteers and myself and others to take a look at this. As I said, we have 51 animals. They're mostly in, right now, coastal communities. We have a few in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Timing is of the essence. There is some interbreeding going on and we'd like to get a handle on the breeding control of this breed within our province for the future of everyone.

Thank you very much.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the petition.

I think it's a very important petition, and to be proud of our heritage is something in this province we all should be. I look forward to reading this petition and meeting with the people and moving this forward over the next little while.

Thank you very much for the petition.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

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

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that all future provincial elections have written and verbal instruction on voting process translated into all provincial Indigenous languages and their respective dialects. Providing our Indigenous people with accurate information in their own language is essential to ensuring that they have the ability to cast a valid and democratic vote.

Inuit, Innu and Mi'kmaq are Indigenous peoples, the first peoples of our province so we believe that the information regarding the democratic process to vote should be available in our province's first languages.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that all future provincial elections have written and verbal instructions on the voting process translated into all provincial Indigenous languages and their respective dialects.

Why am I presenting this petition again? We do have a Committee in place to deal with the Elections Act, but I think it is very important. Just looking at this petition that I have in front of me, two of the people who signed this petition at actually Inuktitut teachers involved in curriculum development for the language.

Another thing with this petition is that the people who signed it were from different communities, so I think it is actually a good petition to present, but, more importantly, I think what happened in the last election really impacted people. It made people actually reflect on the democratic process. We didn't notice in past elections that the instructions on voting weren't actually translated into our first Indigenous peoples languages: Inuktitut, Innu-aimun and Mi'kmaw language.

I think it is important to make sure that not only do we change that but we actually identify it as a past failing that impacted people. It was never thought about so we have to question: Why wasn't it thought about? How could we actually have an election in Newfoundland and Labrador and not have the instructions on how to vote for your Member of the House of Assembly that's going to represent you, that's going to fight for your rights, that's going to try to make sure that the communities in your district are looked after and protected, Mr. Speaker? We never had the instructions on how to cast a vote in the language of the first peoples so how do we know that they actually were voting for the people that they chose.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I call Orders of the Day.

#### Orders of the Day

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

**P. FORSEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's great to be here in the –

**SPEAKER:** Oh, sorry, my apologies.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call Motion 1.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Exploits, we'll reset the clock for you.

**P. FORSEY:** I'd like to be as fast on petitions.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, it's great to be here in the House of Assembly again to discuss issues in my district. Of course, the budget regarding

health care in the region, it didn't meet the specs of what we were really looking for with regard to health care.

Health care is wide ranged in our district, of course, Mr. Speaker, that runs from seniors, doctors, administration, especially the CEO of Central Health. It's been a year now since we've even had a CEO at Central Health. She retired last June, put in her resignation. Right now, that CEO is still not on site.

We've just went through an amazing brush with COVID for the past two weeks, almost a month now, actually. We went from Level 2 to Level 4 in a quick instance. To have a CEO on site to monitor those issues would have been ideal, at the time, yet the CEO is still in New Brunswick. We're paying a CEO that's in New Brunswick and we have no one on site. That issue becomes a challenging issue for health care in the Exploits District. It's time to get that rectified and for the health department to search for another CEO.

Mr. Speaker, then we have a doctor shortage, of course, in Central Newfoundland. I have gotten a number of calls from people trying to see a doctor, trying to find doctors but there's nowhere that they seem to get a doctor to be able to take them. That's becoming a big issue. This is causing a great stress on seniors. Seniors have to travel great distances now just to see a specialist. We're trying to put more money into seniors' pocket, trying to help out seniors. This certainly needs to be addressed.

I do know one lady called me, she had to go see a dermatologist here in the city. That was a great expense to her. They had to put fuel in their car. It was in the middle of winter sort of thing, so they had to drive in in the wintertime. It cost them a hotel room because they couldn't drive back and forth in one day, so it was an amazing expense; amazing stress on the individuals themselves to just be able to see a dermatologist. Doctor shortages are certainly a big issue in our district, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure it's not only in our district; it's an issue that's all across the province. Government has to start taking initiatives to bring doctors to (inaudible), to make it interesting for them to stay here, to keep them here, raise their families,

while (inaudible), Mr. Speaker, to keep doctors here. That's another issue in the district.

As far as seniors go, Mr. Speaker, keeping money in seniors' pockets right now (inaudible), the elderly would like to stay in their own homes.

(Technical difficulties.)

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

It seems like we're having issues with the Member for Exploits's microphone. With the consent of the House, I'll ask him to move to MHA Dwyer's seat.

I apologize for the interruption there.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We'll continue with the Budget Speech. Again, like I said earlier, it's great to be here speaking on the budget and it's great to be here representing the great District of Exploits. I'd like to thank the people of Exploits District for putting me in this position for the second time; they're able to bring their concerns and their issues to the House of Assembly. I'm very proud to do that and very honoured to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe I ended off with seniors with regard to trying to keep money in seniors' pockets and trying to keep seniors in their own homes with regard to home care subsidies. I realize that I did mention this last week when I spoke that senior subsidies got cut in 2016. That's very unfortunate because they cut their subsidies. They got less hours for home care, yet they increased their contribution. That's disturbing for seniors to be treated that way, especially now with the rising cost of food, the rising cost of fuel, the rising cost of –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask Members to take their meetings outside.

**P. FORSEY:** – home maintenance, Mr. Speaker. All that's become a big burden on

seniors, and I guess anyone on a fixed income, because it's very stressful to be able to fix and repair their homes with the price of lumber, the cost of all the repair and maintenance that needs to be done. So finding a way to keep money in seniors' pockets is becoming crucial.

Again, Mr. Speaker, dentures, eyeglasses: If the seniors have to spend more money on their homes, spend more money on heat, spend more money on food, then their basic personal necessities – their eyeglasses, their dentures – becomes a problem to seniors. They shouldn't have to do without eyeglasses; they shouldn't have to do without their dentures because they have to find some way to have some heat in their house, food in their home or even home care. That money shouldn't be taken from those seniors. We should be finding more ways to help the seniors in our province. It's cruel the way they're being treated.

Mr. Speaker, policing: Policing was another issue that was brought up to me during the election. It seems like the shortage of police officers – crime seems to be on the rise in our way. One time you hardly heard of crime, basically. I'm sure everybody has crime, but it seems like it's on the increase now in the past little while because it seems like they know that the police aren't around. It's harder to see a police officer. The presence of police officers alone is disturbing. It creates an issue to the businesses; it creates an issue to the residents. I've noticed more people are keeping their door locked around now, even the smaller communities, because they're afraid now of the crime and the people that are around. That is because of the shortage of police, Mr. Speaker.

Again, with the shortage of police, dirt bikes and ATVs are becoming more of an issue on roadways, because they know you can probably use the roadways and they're easier access to get where they want to go. They know there are no police around, so a lot of people are using the roadways with their ATVs, dirt bikes and that sort of thing, Mr. Speaker. Those are issues that need to be addressed.

There needs to be more money put into policing, or maybe the wildlife officers. I don't know how much enforcement can be done in that way in regard to working with the police. I've had some

conversation with some of the communities there – and it's a good idea, probably. They feel like if the police and the wildlife enforcement officers, especially with dirt bikes, quads and that sort of thing, if they're using that on town streets, town roads, then maybe if the enforcement officers are on those streets, too, maybe they can use their influence to control that part of the problem, Mr. Speaker.

Roads in the district; again, it's everybody's problem. We have potholes, bad roads, holes and brush cutting. There are numerous needs for the roads in the district, especially if we're going to increase tourism. Again, with health care, we're driving long distances, that sort of stuff. We need our roads fixed up a bit more, Mr. Speaker, to keep people safer on our highways, safer on our roads. I know there's brush cutting along one of the main highways, the Botwood highway. There are even trees growing up now alongside the highway, right next to the pavement. That's becoming an issue as well. That stuff needs to be taken care of in our district.

Regular maintenance then, of course, can be done. Probably, if the Transportation Minister got a contractor sometimes to do some of the smaller work, Minister, maybe the workers could put more time into the regular maintenance of the roadways, especially guardrails, the pothole patching, while contracting out some cutting and paving. Maybe that can be done quicker. I'm sure if the contractor wanted to, he would get it done in probably less time as it was to get our own workers to do it. By the time they get set up with their safety issues and that kind of stuff, the amount of work that they get done in a run of a day – maybe that's something we would look into.

Hopefully we'll get some more roadwork in our district. I'm looking forward to that. I know the constituents in my area are certainly looking forward to roadwork.

Internet service, Mr. Speaker, the same thing. I've heard this brought up in a lot of districts, Internet services. Again, it was certainly brought to light during the election with regard to the Internet services. I've heard a lot of people mention with regard to trying to get their ballots

ordered and trying to get them back. It really became a problem, especially for seniors and especially more so in the rural areas, in the outport parts that the Internet service is poor. We need to have more access to Internet services.

I know the Minister of Health has been alluding to telemedicine. If we're moving more to telemedicine, then I don't know what we expect with regard to health if we don't have the Internet service. If that can't be provided in a rural area, in an outlying area. If you have a patient that's in critical health and there's no Internet service and that needs to be done with regard to telemedicine, then the Internet services are certainly going to need to be addressed. We're certainly going to need more attention put on that.

That is another big problem, Mr. Speaker. Not only that, there are people trying to create more businesses out in the outlying areas which, of course, Internet service today – I know for the farmers in our area, farmers in the Wooddale area, Internet service is a big, big issue. They're farmers. They've been in business for 20, 30 years some of them. They still don't have access to Internet service with regard to ordering product, finding new ways of enhancing their farms. Even selling their product. I know they even have a market in there that they can't promote it with regard to Internet service. That's a big issue, Internet service.

If we're going to go with tourism, especially on the outlying area – everybody loves the rugged shores, rugged coast and beautiful beaches, so if there is more tourism activity to be done that's where the Internet service is certainly going to have to be addressed, again, and put more emphasis on the outlying areas. That's another big issue in the district, Mr. Speaker, is tourism.

Crown lands, again, waiting two to five years for Crown land applications, that is becoming terrible. I hear this not only from the District of Exploits; I hear it from a lot of districts, from Labrador right on down to the Avalon Peninsula. Faster application approvals of Crown lands certainly would enhance the service and revenue for our economy, so we need to touch more on the Crown land part of it.

Tourism, Mr. Speaker, again, is a big part in the district that we could be looking at. I know that a lot of businesses have tried to start with regard to efficiency units, tour-boat operators and restaurants. Again, more emphasis can be done in tourism in our area to create more employment. Tourism could be big employment in our area, Mr. Speaker. Employment is another area that we have to find, to tap into the Exploits District because we need employment.

In order to keep our province going, we need to find a way to create jobs, to create industry and to create employment to keep people in our areas. That's how we're going to keep our schools, that's how we're going to keep our hospitals and that's how we're going to keep our roads: by people being employed and the money rotating back through taxes and that sort of thing. Mr. Speaker, we have to find ways of doing that in the Exploits District.

Forestry is another big industry in the district, Mr. Speaker, that I hear every day with regard to we have no secondary processing manufacturer in the Exploits District, in the Central region. I did mention this to the minister the other day with regard to the forestry industry and that we need to find something directly in the industry. Right now with the price of lumber, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people are enraged that they're paying the price of lumber. We have our own resources right here in our own backyard, and people have to go to the store and pay \$12 or \$13 just for a two-by-four. To know that we can't get an industry right in the Exploits District, right in Central Newfoundland, to compensate for some of that cost of the lumber.

With most of our lumber, with the prices, because you can't get any lumber in Ontario; they can't get any lumber in Quebec, so all of our lumber, with regard to supply and demand, it's being shipped out of our province. Taking our resource and gone right out of our province and they're making bigger dollars. We only have so much supply, so how much more demand can we absorb? We're going to have to soon monitor the supply and demand on our forest products.

Mining, Mr. Speaker, I know mining is a big issue. Lots of minerals in our area that could be tapped into. I know Marathon Gold is being set up in 2023. We are looking at upwards of 400

jobs being created by Marathon Gold, which is great to see, Mr. Speaker.

If we could get something on the mining, if we could get forestry, even the fishery – Leading Ticks, on the outlying part of our district, is a big fishing community. There are a lot of fishermen out there. If we could get something, probably even the seal fishery, hopefully something comes available for that.

If we could get the farming, if we could get the fishery, if we could get the forestry and we could get the mining and oil and gas. Imagine if we could only get that all working the one time in this province. The royalties and the jobs that we would have here in this province would be numerous. It would be a great place to live and our services would be second to none. Our roads would be looked after on a regular basis; health care would be put back; doctors should be coming to this province and be able to stay here.

Mr. Speaker, those are some of the issues that I have been hearing in my district – not only in my district; I have been hearing them all across this province.

I know that health care is huge in our district, Mr. Speaker. We need some emphasis certainly put on the health care to alleviate – we have a lot of issues in our district that need some attention. Hopefully, I'll get a chance again in the next few days to talk about the district.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll wait for another time.

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.

When I taught English in high school one of the novels or novelettes that I taught was *Animal Farm*. If you remember – those of you who've read it – Napoleon, the pig, always blamed Snowball for everything that went wrong. Whether it was the windmill falling, food shortages, invasion by the farmers, you name it,

Snowball was the scapegoat; usually to redirect the people's attention or the pig's attention away from his own failings and to keep them under control.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Where's this going?

**J. DINN:** Simple, where is this going? Good question.

Muskrat Falls is the Snowball of the House of Assembly. I'm at the stage since I've come here from the get-go, if we can't get a program off the ground, it's Muskrat Falls. If we don't have money, it's Muskrat Falls. If the weather changes, it's Muskrat Falls.

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

**J. DINN:** If it's this and that, it's Muskrat Falls every bloody time.

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

**J. DINN:** Now, I haven't had the advantage of being part of that decision or not, but I can tell you snowball has got to go: Muskrat Falls has got to go.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** We're trying.

**J. DINN:** Listen, try harder.

I'll tell you right now –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. DINN:** I'll tell you right now, rather than relying on –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

Rather than relying on the blame game here of your own shortcomings, deal with it and move on.

Seriously, I was elected in 2019, it's 2021 and two years straight it's still going on. Somewhere

along the line, please, we've got problems, let's deal with them. We all know it's Muskrat Falls. I don't need to be reminded of it.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. DINN:** I just need, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we have problems, let's deal with it. I don't need to know what the reason is.

So here we go, Muskrat Falls snowball is in the House again. I've been asking a few questions and here's the other issue that I've been asking questions on – and I got my answer to them, which is what I wanted – it has to do with privatization. Basically, that in a privatized system government has no control. Government is powerless to act to protect the citizens of this province. We have to be careful about heading down this road. We have to be careful about: we'll get more requests to interfere. We have to let the process take its course.

Cold comfort, Mr. Speaker, to seniors who are on fixed incomes; who are trying to put food on the table; keep the house heated in the wintertime; who are probably trying to get their houses upgraded and more energy efficient; to young people and young families who are trying to make up their mind whether they're going to stay here or not; to immigrants who are coming here to this province – and we're hoping that what we're going to do is to retain them.

Now, from the Estimates Committee meeting this morning, Nova Scotia is actually retaining 62 per cent of its immigrants. Newfoundland next, 11 points behind that, at 51 per cent. We know that they're going to face increased costs for tuition and increased costs in other ways. People are watching prices increase and with every day it eats away at their disposable income for the treats, I guess, and for their necessities of life.

Again, I go back, Mr. Speaker, we bring up the question sometimes of a \$15 minimum wage and we'll hear how difficult and how expensive it will make lives for people here now, people won't be able to afford it. Yet, look around. I went out and bought a piece of two-by-four by eight and a piece of two-by-two by eight and



that's \$16 for those two miserable pieces of lumber. So to anyone who needs to do repairs – major repairs – it's going to represent a significant increase.

My daughter is moving away for the next two years. She's completing a fellowship in Calgary. I'm really hoping that she's going to be able to come back here; she's doing pediatrics. I don't know if there will be that employment back here, but that's the reality to, not only my family but to many families who are living it today. I've listened to some Members on this side who have worked in the oil field, who have been away most of their lives.

Here's my issue with privatization: It's interesting, because if we're going to head down that path or to some sort of a public-private partnership, I think we need to be aware of the consequences that we surrender, as a government, control and we surrender our ability to protect the taxpayers.

It's interesting, if you look at some of the studies of The Sentencing Project, the United States actually moved towards privatizing its prisons. Actually, it has the world's largest private prison population. "From 2000 to 2016 the number of people housed in private prisons increased five times faster than the total prison population." Yet, there are already states realizing this is not going to work and they are eliminating the use of private prisons. Why? Due to concerns about safety and cost-cutting, because ultimately the main objective of any private, for-profit organization is profit.

Nothing wrong with that, but when you're talking about a core service, a core public good, it's the government's duty to protect its citizens, the needs of its citizens and the people which it serves, whether they're in prison or not.

A few weeks ago I was listening to CBC. Just Right cereal: Now, you probably won't be able to find that on your supermarket shelves anymore. Eliminated not because of, necessarily, the lack of demand or anything like that, but it's just not making enough money, not making enough profit. It's still making a profit, but not quite enough. There are other, more sugary cereals that are doing that.

Shoppers Drug Mart recently installed self-checkouts, owned by Loblaws. This is on a recent *CBC News* item: "During a November 2020 Loblaws earnings call, the company pinpointed self-checkouts as one of its 'efficiency initiatives' ...." I love the term of what I call weasel words: efficiency initiatives. In other words, we don't need a person to work here anymore.

They "said it has helped the retail giant cut operating costs." Now, this time it had to do with the fact that some Shoppers Drug Mart customers were being pushed to use self-serve checkouts. The bottom line was the most important.

Air Canada is another one. A rescue package from the federal government of \$5.98 billion, \$5.9 billion and yet they still gave \$10 million in bonuses to their top executives for their exceptional performance during COVID-19. Now, do you think they were thinking about their customers, about the people who fly on the plane as their customers? I don't know. They laid off 20,000 workers. That's obviously the exceptional performance. They held customer refunds until they got a bailout. Doesn't sound like they were thinking about the customer or the taxpayer in that case. They also took \$656 million from public money from the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy program, more than any other company in Canada. The bottom line is profit.

In Nova Scotia, I don't know if any of you have driven it, but I'm sure you've gone through the Cobequid Pass Toll highway; a beautiful drive. You don't have to face a whole lot in terms of traffic. It's well kept. It's a P3 initiative and it cost \$232 million more to build, finance and maintain than a publicly built project; \$102 million additional financing costs; an extra \$121 million operations and another extra \$9 million in maintenance. Costs should have been around \$124.6 million.

Here's the thing, the government can't even pay down the outstanding debt without penalties. The interesting part about this is that the maintenance of the highway is actually subcontracted back to – wait for it – the province for snow clearing and everything else. It's also excluded from the *Public Utilities Act*; therefore,

rate changes are not subject to review by the Utility and Review Board.

Even here within this House of Assembly – not in this House, but in this building – I was told that the cleaning staff who clean our offices, and do a remarkable job, are privately contracted. I would say that their wages and their benefits are just a shadow of public servants everywhere. So we privatize, we downsize salaries and people, the workers, are seen as costs to be controlled and cut.

Then, my main question with regard to Newfoundland Power – and this was where I was going – there is no control. We can't interfere; we're powerless to do anything. There's a process in place. That's what we hear; we have to be careful about going down that road. But in the end what it's going to mean is that if the rate is approved, someone – and by someone I mean my mother, the seniors in my district, those who are already struggling to make ends meet; the person who lives off \$40 a week after paying all of his bills and who is on income support, you name it; the students who are attending our university – will have to decide: Well, will I use the food bank this week?

The businesses, the small mom-and-pop shops, the supermarkets who are going to rely on the power – but guess where that increase is going to be put? It's going to be put back into the food prices and back on the seniors, the students and the people with limited resources. That's who is going –

**P. LANE:** Don't forget the municipalities.

**J. DINN:** The municipalities – that's where it's going to go. It's going to come back to the individual.

I understand the need for efficiencies, but if indeed we're looking at some sort of a joint partnership and if it's about the bottom line, let's talk about it in terms of the human cost to the people who are already struggling within our province and who are probably at the stage where they don't have the ability to pick up and move. It will be the ones who can afford to pick up and move who will pick up and move, but for many people here they're going to be stuck paying the extra and trying to make it work.

They will be the ones calling our offices and wondering how are they going to pay the light bill.

I don't know how many light bills we used to pay when I was with St. Vincent de Paul. A \$1,000 light bill and I would say: How in the name of God do you get to a \$1,000 light bill? But, of course, if you're struggling in the winter months, well, I have to put food on the table or something like that, something has to be cut, and I'm going to cut paying the bill. That's the struggle. That's the real struggle. Yes, it might cost us a little bit more to keep it cool in the summertime and warm in the wintertime, but in the end we're not going to be the ones that are going to be truly paying the price.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I'm looking at this budget – and I've listened to questions from this side of the House and, basically – the questions I hear are looking for some clarity as to where we are going. I think those are reasonable questions and deserve to be answered in a reasonable way. They're not my questions, but they're questions that I have an interest in hearing. Actually, they're questions that many of the people in my district have an interest in hearing.

The gentleman I told you about a little at the beginning of this last week, who basically is wondering if he'll be able to live in his own home, he has \$16,000 to live on right now; proud of the fact that he paid off his home, a very modest home. We're not talking a mansion, a 4,000-square-foot house; we're talking about the centre city here.

His one pleasure is to go out for a day trouting. He has to wonder if at this point can he stay in his own home, or will he have to look at moving into some sort of a retirement home where, guess what, it's going to fall on our backs. He is going to be one more dependent individual who, up until this point, has been very proud of his independence.

If we are indeed looking at some sort of a joint partnership, if indeed we're looking at privatizing core government services, I think we need to have a full – to be very careful about this to have short-term financial gain and long-term systemic and societal pain for a lot of the people we serve.

We're a privileged lot in this building right here, very much so. I think we need to keep in mind that there are a lot of people out there in our districts who are struggling and who don't come from that background of privilege.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time and I leave it at that.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

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

I just want to speak on the Budget Speech again. In the speech, there is a section there that covers seniors and the quote: "Our government is unwavering in its commitment to supporting seniors and ensuring all citizens remain healthy, active and engaged." The budget has \$300,000 to increase healthy, inclusive communities; \$95,000 to make communities more inclusive; \$300,000 for SeniorsNL to support seniors; \$200,000 for the Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative.

These are all very, very important programs. Just looking at the words in this budget: "increase healthy, inclusive communities," "support seniors." For me, these programs are wonderful, wonderful, but in my district, they're a luxury. When I looked up the definition of luxury: the state of great comfort and extravagant living. No offence, Mr. Speaker, but in my district a lot of my seniors struggle. Not because they weren't active and worked jobs when they were younger. Now they're in retirement and they struggle because of the gaps in infrastructure and the gaps in services. Our seniors struggle with basic living: food, shelter, a warm place – or should I say, a place that they can keep warm.

I was talking to several people yesterday. Two were elders that worked with Labrador Inuit Association back in the day and another person is working now with Nunatsiavut Government and worked with LIA back in the day. We were talking about gaps in infrastructure and when did this start. I was saying it started since the Joey days. All three of them – separate conversations

– brought up the Native Peoples agreement. That's where federal dollars came in to help the Innu and the Inuit of Labrador with their infrastructure. That was administered by the province. All three of them talked about basically failings for monies to go to help the Indigenous people it was earmarked for. That sort of continued on up the line with the districts as well.

Like, I know when I present the petition for increasing the life block, electricity rates – the petition that I present over and over again – and I get beat up on it. They bring up Muskrat Falls. Too bad the Member for the Third Party is not here, because he would appreciate that. But do you want to know something? It's really difficult. When I talk about that petition for electricity rates, what I'm talking about is the ability for our seniors to be able to have a warm place in the middle of the winter.

It's very important for our seniors, because they either have to pay for stove oil – and in my petition, I talked about an elder who is a widower and basically in the winter spends her entire pension on stove oil so she can heat her house. When I talked to her about it, it was the struggle. She had people there that could cut and haul wood, even though it was very difficult, but she still struggled with the ability to bring it in. A lot of times it's not reliable, so she said for her, just to have sound mind, she pays her pension towards her stove oil. She's very, very lucky because her family members help her with the other basic living costs that she encounters.

I was talking to a very strong, respected man – well, actually I was talking to his wife. He's basically a bit of a legend. I have great respect for him. She was telling me, she said: Lela, now for him when he needs to haul the wood – especially the wood for next fall; you have to haul a lot of wood – he'll leave the house at 4 o'clock in the morning because it's a long way to go. It's a great distance. He doesn't want to be coming back after dark with a load of wood. Because, of course, when you get older, you have problems seeing at night.

That's something that people don't normally take into consideration. For most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians when they talk about night driving, they talk about getting

in the car at night and you're worried because of the lights and all the interference. But for our senior, it's about the ability to safely bring a load of wood back to their house after it gets dark. Up there, it's not daylight until 8 o'clock and then it gets dark around quarter after 3, so the rush is on to get wood.

That's important. Like I say, it's not about comfort, but it's just about quality of life for people. It's very, very important.

Moving on, I just want to talk a little bit about the freight boat again. We call it the freight boat. When that boat was taken off the run that brought food and building materials and household goods up to the North Coast it kept the costs down. That was taken off without any consultation with Nunatsiavut. It was taken off and we were basically told that we could buy goods from Quebec. Just go to Quebec and buy the goods. Now when we look at the cost of food, it's really impacting our seniors. I'm still on the topic of seniors, regarding our Budget Speech.

When you're trying to heat your house and you're trying to feed yourself, what does that do? When you don't have enough money, it makes you very vulnerable. As a First World nation, as a province, we want to make sure our seniors are not vulnerable, that they're safe and they have confidence in the ability to manage their lives. But really what's happening in my district is a lot of times elders are vulnerable. They're in living situations where they have no control of. A lot of times they even lose control of their money because they're staying with somebody else.

A lot of times they're living in a house just because there's a man in the house that can haul wood, chop it up and bring it into the house. With that goes their freedom to make choices, their freedom on how they spend their money, even their freedom to access their money. That's when our seniors are really vulnerable, Mr. Speaker. Quality of life is very, very important for us.

I remember when I was campaigning. The reason why I was campaigning is because they took away the freight boat. That's the real reason why I ran to be an MHA. I remember I was in

Nain. I was in a house. I was talking to a senior. I was sitting on the floor next to her on the couch. There was a lot of space on the floor. I was just being polite, sitting there on the floor the way that I usually do. She said to me that she was really hopeful this summer because they were going to hire more workers at the fish plant. I told some of my co-workers this story. I'm sitting on the floor on my knees and when she said that I actually jumped up and sat next to her on the couch. I was just going to put my arm around her. I realized, well, I can't be doing that. She didn't really even know me.

The reason for that response, Mr. Speaker, was because I wanted to protect her. I picture this older lady now, really hopeful that she's going to get a job in the fish plant so she can earn some money. That's the situation that never should exist. Our seniors, our older people, they should be able to live in comfort.

This wasn't a person that was spending her money on addictions and gambling and smoking and drinking and all the stuff that we get blamed for – our mismanagement of our money. It's basically somebody on a small pension and really having trouble heating their house and buying food and being able to actually have quality of life. That's very, very important.

Just going on to economic development. I'm just trying to get through my things that I wanted to talk about. When we talk about economic development and sustainability and the environment – everything is about the environment, improving the environment now and protecting the environment. One of the things that we really should be focusing on is our fishery for our future. Because a lot of times it's overlooked, it's forgotten, it's shoved back into the dark closet because a lot of times just our history of being ashamed of our fisherpeople because it was considered labour, a type of labour.

The thing is, when you look at the fishery, it's sustainable, it's renewable and it has low impact on the environment. We need to make sure that we're not losing focus on that. Also, the healthy food that comes from the ocean is very important for us.

Just looking at mining: projecting over \$9 billion in mineral shipments. We were looking at projecting \$4 billion in mineral shipments from the province. That's a huge contribution to the province for royalties. It would be really nice if we put up a map and stuck pincushions on there – colour-coded ones – and showed where the value of the mineral shipments was coming from. When you look at that map and the mineral shipments that are coming from Labrador, I think you would see the true value that Labrador contributes to the coffers of this province.

It's much greater than four seats out of 40, because I think that's really what contributed to our problem as well. Really, when you look at four seats out of 40, Labradorians don't have much of a voice. When you look at the hydroelectricity, even though Joey gave it away, but if you look at the Voisey's Bay nickel, copper and cobalt; if you look at the iron ore that comes out of Lab West, the thing is the economic benefit to this province has been great over the years since we joined Confederation – truly, truly great.

When I look at my district, very little provincial dollars have actually gone into my district. The provincial dollars that have gone into my district have been administered by the province but they come from the federal government. Even then, I don't think we got our fair share.

Moving on to Connectivity: \$25 million is allocated over the next three years to improve cellular service and broadband service. I'd like to see how much the provincial government has spent on broadband service in my district. I also would like to see how much actually the provincial government has spent on cellular service for Labrador, and how much they spent in my district, because the dollar value would be zero, even though Nain has partial cellphone service.

That's something that somebody should actually go in and do a little bit of research on. How much money has been spent in my district for cellphone service and broadband service? Because I remember just after I got elected and I was on a teleconference with the MP for Labrador and Bell Aliant, what was said to me was that there are monies out there, pots of

money and Bell Aliant was accessing them. It was cost-shared, the province didn't have to put up any money; Bell Aliant had to put a small percentage of money and the rest was going to be federal dollars.

Looking at it, all of Labrador got upgrades; all of Labrador got upgrades except the North Coast. I wanted to know why. I was told on the call it is because the infrastructure of the Internet, broadband on the North Coast was really too outdated and it would cost too much to bring it up, to upgrade it. This was actually money spent to upgrade broadband in Labrador. My district was so outdated they weren't going to spend any money to upgrade it. What it did is it pushed it back. That's why in Hopedale, that's why in Rigolet, that's why in Nain and in Makkovik a lot of times when Bell Aliant comes into my community to do repairs – I get the call, I get the call all the time, and don't stop calling me because it's the only way you're going to get any repairs – a lot of times at the root of it is the infrastructure is too outdated.

Even though the technician is there to do the repairs and bring it up so that you can have access to high-speed Internet, you still don't have high-speed Internet after he's gone. You lose it.

The gap and (inaudible) – I can't even speak, I'm so – I try not to get upset. The gap increases – widens – that's the word I was looking for. You want to talk about issues and problems when we have that huge gap in infrastructure and services, we just have to look at COVID.

I was in Rigolet trying to be on – I like saying that because it sounds funny – trying to be on the Zoom, taking 10 minutes to load. I was actually at the Inuit Community Government office. That's like municipal governments, the mayors – I wonder how they do their work in the middle of the day. The AngajukKâk in Makkovik was telling me how long it takes, sometimes a PDF, a single PDF to open – the gap is there.

When you talk about the Budget Speech and connectivity, that's not including my district. If we're going to get cellphone service and if we're going to get real high-speed Internet, it's going to come from the federal government.

I was talking with is NG, the Nunatsiavut Government, they are basically just bypassing the province now trying to access the federal dollars so they can actually have improvements in those gaps for services and infrastructure. That money that was supposed to be given to us since the Joey days; at least now we have self-government and Nunatsiavut is trying to take control of that. I also see it with the Innu; it's very, very important. Nobody tells the Innu what to do anymore. Nothing maybe done, but no one is telling the Innu what to do anymore.

Anyway, I have less than four minutes.

For me it is really, really difficult sometimes to talk about these things. It has been in the news, residential schools have been brought up again, the history of residential schools. We had the tragedy – it wasn't a current tragedy but we had the discovery of the 215 graves of young children who were in residential schools who passed away. It wasn't uncovered until recently, a lot of parents didn't have closure as to what happened to their children.

The harm has really been documented over residential schools, but what people tend to forget when it is not in the news is the intergenerational trauma. The harm is being documented now – I've got a book here that is basically on residential schools: *A Long Journey* it is called by Andrea Procter. She went around and interviewed people from residential schools, and it is emotional to talk about. What's in this book is not the true accounting; it is a start but really a lot of the things were too difficult to talk about.

I think it is a good read for everybody. When you go into page 83, there is a section here about vulnerable children in boarding school – we called it boarding school, residential schools – and they basically went to school when they were five, they left in the fall and never came back until next summer. They didn't have any parental protection, anyone to talk to or a sense of family.

"I went to school when I was seven because it was Confederation then, if you didn't go to school you didn't get your family allowance ...." That's blackmail. That's why parents continued to send their kids to school. "The fear

of reprisal meant that children at boarding school rarely had anyone they could turn to for help. Ruth also suffered a traumatic sexual assault that she kept secret for years before she felt ready to seek help. 'I have dealt with it, and I have gone past it. No one should have to go through that. You shouldn't have to be thinking about things like that.'"

I read this paragraph last year for the first time. That was my aunt. I knew nothing about it. She was one of the strong people that actually spoke out. She received the Order of Canada for her work to ensure women were protected. She fought for RCMP presence in Makkovik. She fought for having shelters. We call them safe houses for women.

The thing about it is, I'm the MHA for Torngat Mountains. Randy Edmunds was the MHA for Torngat Mountains. Wally Andersen was the MHA for Torngat Mountains, my uncle. Randy is my cousin. We came from a family where our grandmother was widowed at a very young age and she actually needed that family allowance to raise her children. They went to residential school. If they didn't, there would have been no monies coming in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER (Warr):** The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

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

As my colleague from Torngat Mountains just indicated in her very powerful remarks, it's a very difficult time in Labrador right now. I believe we've had four people take their life since last Monday. Most of these people I knew. I suspect that she also knew them as well.

It just brings very close to home how everyone is feeling. I'm trying to find the right word to describe what is happening in Kamloops. While it's described in the news as "news," for certainly survivors, for their families, for the victims, for anyone who has been around, anyone who has talked about the residential school system, it shouldn't be news.

I started working in Labrador in '87. I can remember working with the Labrador Inuit Association in the late '80s and listening to people talk about how they were taken away from their parents, their families, everything they knew at such a young age. For some, it wasn't so difficult as what my colleague just read about, but for all of them there was the trauma of being separated from their family.

Sunday morning I had the honour of being on a stage with Dr. Jean Crane, who is also a survivor. She is 92 years of age. I call her a very dear friend of mine. We led a very powerful session with many people in Happy Valley-Goose Bay who are just dealing with this problem and trying to find a way forward.

Saturday morning I was with my colleague from Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair – with the minister – and we were at the site of the new mental health wing. Oh my goodness, thank goodness that we're finally reaching out to other parts of the province. While it's been definitely something long overdue which is replacing the Waterford, we also need to find ways to reach out to other parts of the province. I'm very proud to see this mental health wing now under construction. We met with the contractor and it's really important to see that. Unfortunately, it's not coming quick enough and fast enough. Even if these services and supports are there, I'm not so naive to think that it will solve all of our problems. But we certainly are working hard at it.

Also, last night I had a call with some colleagues of one of the gentlemen who took their life just very recently. They reached out to me wanting to see what they could do. This was organized labour. It was a union just struggling to try to comprehend. I think most of this room – no, I know all of us in this room, if we could figure out a way to just write a cheque and totally address the issue that is the mental health crisis in our province, we would all do it. We would all stand in full support. It's complicated. As we're learning about the residential school system, colonialism and so many other challenges of the past, this is multi-generational and it's going to take a while for us to get through it.

As part of my role in wanting to make sure as an independent Member representing Lake Melville I've been reaching out to different people in the district. I must say I am so proud to live where I do and represent the people that I do. I thank them for some of the contribution.

What I'm going to do is, over the next few minutes, I want to speak to some recommendations that I've received from a couple of different sources. I'm going to be picking from different comments. This is all around Indigenous persons and the justice system. For the benefit of the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, I will try to put this in a letter and I'll send that on to him on behalf of these constituents who've sent this to me. I'd like to use my time here today just to talk about some observations, some feelings that I'm feeling from the community around the justice system and the Indigenous residents of my district and across Labrador and across this province.

Some of the thoughts: We do have a large number of Indigenous persons who have been charged, convicted, imprisoned or are on parole or probation in Labrador. The numbers unfortunately seem to be increasing as each year passes. It is an absolute must to ensure that we put a large priority on community safety, rehabilitation and reintegration. It certainly cannot happen without accessing culturally appropriate, ethical, easy-to-understand and long-term programming with quality aftercare programming and supports. No more quick-fix programs. They do not work.

Historically, Labrador Aboriginal Legal Services operated a broad range of in-house programming at the Labrador Correctional Centre, with funding from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Unfortunately, this funding ceased many years ago. It's advocated by those who've reached out to me that this model does need to be revisited, modernized and accessible.

I have to say, over my time serving as the MHA for Lake Melville, I've had the occasion to visit the Labrador Correctional Centre, particularly around what's coming up now with National Indigenous Peoples Day in this country on the 21st of June and being able to see some of these cultural programs and see people teaching skills that frankly descend from their culture that they

never even had an opportunity to ever witness before.

I can recall one woman cleaning a ptarmigan – we call them partridge – and the large crowd around this small, diminutive woman and the feedback and the interaction she had with people who are really trying to find their way. It's messages like that that will really help prepare for their reintegration into society.

The next item I have here, it's a very controversial one. I'll put it out there. I think whatever we do, we have to think about it. Certainly, some people come to me and say we need to stop any kind of faith-based programming. It's suggested that if an inmate wants counselling or their services, they really should be asking for it. I guess it's the perception of some advocates that they're seeing the churches showing up and perhaps pushing a message. The leaders that I see in different organizations in Labrador, I have such respect and appreciate, but I also can appreciate the sensitivity. I think it's just one that we need to move carefully on.

Clearly, the efforts of the prime minister and others right now around the residential school system and what this country is struggling with and looking to church leadership for an admission as to the wrongs of the past, I think, are complicating this, so it just needs careful thought.

The next item that I have here is more cultural programs, such as a session that's called my respect program, which is a combination of storytelling, focused and facilitator-led discussion on respect for the land, sustainable harvesting and gathering, nourishment and traditional food and bonding with their children and partners. That's all to prepare them upon release, but they are engaging in this while they're doing their sentences.

Certain crafts, just like making snowshoes, is a very proud – it is amazingly skillful. Amazing skills are required to produce a high-quality set of snowshoes; something we use a lot of. That, along with other traditional crafts, can really draw out and support a sense of value, a sense of purpose, a sense of past and a sense of going forward.

Holding focus groups and asking inmates about the programs they would like to have to participate in – what is it they would be interested in; how do they feel they could be better prepared – and then working out and doing this in co-operation with community agencies, certainly, you can have a session of best community practices that we've seen elsewhere across the North, perhaps to learn a little bit about it. None of these are perhaps new ideas. I just wanted to take this occasion this week because, frankly, I've been exposed to and/or seen some of this referenced, even the other day with the minister and during the Estimates with his team. There's no question there is a lot of expertise and experience there.

This next item, I want to present it with two themes because I feel I need to. As an MHA, I've certainly been reaching out to the Department of Justice and Public Safety on the issue around incarceration of women from Labrador. There's been no option to accommodate women from Labrador except to send them to Clarenville. This has caused additional issues: separated from your land, from your family and from your culture. Out in Clarenville – I said the other day it's an 18-hour drive here to St. John's, so it is probably about 16½, 17 hours to get to Clarenville; it's a long ways away. For people separated from their families and, again, trying to find that mental support that their family could provide, that the area could provide, it's a long ways away.

I so thank the government for stepping forward with this \$6.1-million announcement to developing accommodations for women in Labrador at the Labrador Correctional Centre, but as I emphasized the other day in my remarks at the Estimates, we could also use all those supports – counselling – some of the items that I've mentioned here. There's also a fair bit of interest in establishing a Labrador chapter of the Elizabeth Fry Society. It's a counterpart to the John Howard Society. Many people feel that kind of advocacy, that kind of support and the experience that we could all benefit from would be very beneficial for our situation.

The contradiction I have is that while I feel it's important to have this facility built, there are many that are saying we should take the \$6.1 million and just use it for counselling and



support. I think over the long term it would be remarkable to get there. That's where we need to be. We need to catch people who are crying for help and support them before they get tangled up in a situation where, unfortunately, incarceration is the next step. I understand both opinions here. I think one is short term, the need for the development of accommodations at the Labrador Correctional Centre, but over the long term I think this is the goal we need to get to, where that counselling can be available.

Certainly, these deep roots of trauma will be continued; we are struggling in Happy Valley-Goose Bay today. I have had several messages from residents who are very frustrated with just a very high number of individuals that are battling addictions. We have a variety of services available. Unfortunately, it's a huge challenge for us. I thank the various departments – and I've mentioned this and several of them. There is a Senior Officials Working Group. I do know the deputy minister for Labrador Affairs is staying up at night trying to figure this out, along with other key departments and their deputies. We have a very high level of attention on this very challenging situation.

I can only offer to the community that is very frustrated, that there are a lot of people working on it; there are a lot of steps being made. Again, I wish it were a very simple matter of just throwing money at something, because I can tell you the will would be there to do that, but it's not necessarily going to solve the challenges we have.

The reference to me was the different organizations that are in place – Charles J. Andrew Youth Treatment Centre. It's a remarkable strategy that's been operating in Sheshatshiu for many years; a very effective way to work with youth and sort of embracing with families, as they both work together to help troubled young members of our society move on and lead productive lives.

Certainly, there is no question early intervention strategies to support youth who are struggling and involved with the justice system is absolutely a priority. I do believe it is a priority; it's definitely when we need to pay as much attention on as possible. These are just some ideas around a wish list, Mr. Speaker. I think I

will compile this in a note and I'll send it off to the minister just for his record. *Hansard* is a great thing but I feel it will be important to put that in a letter and let people know in Lake Melville that their messages are being heard.

I wanted to pick up a little bit on my colleague from Torngat Mountains and switch gears a little bit. I'm always marking time and I've been fortunate to live in Labrador now – I'm on 34 years. I've seen a lot of good ideas come, sometimes go, sometimes come back again into the everyday conversation. I go back to 1995; there was a proponent, Gerry Germain, who was looking to establish the Kamistasin hydro project. This was just at the time when the Voisey's Bay project was coming on in 1995.

He saw a way to develop a hydro project that could feed energy, feed electricity into Nain – Davis Inlet at the time, because it wasn't Natuashish; the community had not been moved – and the developing and exciting project of Voisey's Bay. I just would like to go back and, really, I don't know, myself and many others were advocating for such an opportunity. We saw ways for both Innu Nation and for the LIA at the time to become involved in a great project and just where we could be had we moved on that project.

Speaking of relocations in time and so on, back to mental health. We were looking at, in 1994, working with the Mushuau Innu Renewal Committee on relocating Davis Inlet. The idea was to take a substantial amount of money from the federal and provincial government to relocate Davis Inlet off a very difficult and challenging place to Natuashish. There was also a very substantial amount of money that was dedicated to what was called a program of healing measures. It was going to be put in place; there were supposed to be two parallel processes that would allow for hammers and nails, but also for counselling and support.

I think back now, that's 26 years ago. If we had only been as effective and successful at the healing measures as we had been at building the community, what we could have done. Certainly, a lot of good work has gone on, but there's just so much and, again, so many of these issues are so complicated.

I think with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll thank this House of Assembly for listening; I'll thank everyone for their time. I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak here today.

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

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

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

It's always an honour to speak in this House.

I would be remiss if I didn't officially or formally send my thoughts and prayers out to the Muslim family in London, Ontario, who were killed, and one son remains in critical condition.

As well, we had the accident in Hopedale, where a young man was killed in an ATV accident. Of course, the Member for Lake Melville spoke to some suicides this last little while, which speaks to what we need to be doing in terms of mental health. Of course, today we had our seventh death due to COVID. I send my prayers and thoughts out to all those families, all losing loved ones for different reasons, I guess, or through different means, but all dealing with the same issue of loved ones no longer being with them. I do send my prayers and thoughts out to them.

Again, it's nice to get here in the House of Assembly and speak for the wonderful people of Topsail - Paradise that I represent; wonderful, wonderful community; a wonderful district. I would say, the weather we're getting today here in town, we get that all the time up in Topsail - Paradise. With that weather, of course, it's nice to see the easing of some restrictions around COVID, but I still – as I'm sure all of us here in this House will do – urge people to be diligent in continuing to combat COVID and ensure that we all stay safe.

I think during COVID we've been put under a lot of stress throughout the communities. Wherever we go, there are many things that have put stress on us. I'm looking forward to our discussion tomorrow on our private Member's resolution on mental health. I'm sure we'll hear many stories on why we need to do better.

But I want to talk about our essential workers; our essential workers through this whole pandemic that's well into its second year have done major, major work to keep us safe, to go to work on a daily basis and ensure that we are safe and to ensure that we get the goods and services that we need on a daily basis. I cannot thank the essential workers in all our communities and across the province for what they have done and what they continue to do. It certainly doesn't go unnoticed. The best thing we can do for them is to ensure that the work they've done over the last year and a half or so doesn't go astray by us not maintaining our due diligence when it comes to COVID.

Another group that none of our communities – I'm sure – none of our communities in this province would survive without is our volunteer group. Our volunteer groups are vast. They can go from a fire department in your community – think about it, these are volunteers that are going to go into a burning building not knowing what's on the other end to keep us safe or save a loved one.

We have our Lions Clubs. We have our Rotary Clubs. We have our Kin Club or Kinette Clubs, all these volunteer groups do amazing work within our communities and they help us in so many ways.

We also have our church groups. Our church groups do quite a bit. I know one of the church groups up in my district have lobster boils, they have flipper dinners and they raise quite a bit of money to assist within their communities.

Sports groups: Think about how much it would cost any community, municipality or city if they had to run the sports programs. Many of these programs are volunteers who do quite a bit. Anywhere from a soccer association, hockey, baseball, softball, figure skating, the list goes on with these groups. All these groups operate and meet on a regular basis throughout the year to plan so that our children and young adults can have sports programs to keep them occupied – which is even more important now during COVID – just getting out and being active in some way. They do it all on a volunteer basis. Some of them may have one or two paid staff members. We look to government in terms of summer employment programs – that all helps.

But, essentially, the boards of these groups are volunteer run. They put a lot of effort into it and a lot of them get into it because their children may be involved. A lot of them stay around after their children are gone and keep it moving.

We have arts and entertainment groups within these communities – volunteer groups. There is one up in my district that does painting, singing and song and dance. It's well received and makes a big difference. Of course, we have your Scouts and Girl Guides. They do a lot of things in a community. They have their tree planting.

We also have food banks. There's the CBS/Paradise food bank up in my community. There are other food banks. What they do for individuals who cannot afford a meal, what they do for them certainly gives them hope for each day moving forward that they'll at least be able to put a meal on the table.

Of course, with COVID, sometimes there are some positive things that have come out of it. We have some recreation groups in the district that now organize hiking, walking, running and biking trips. People have been out on the East Coast Trail and the trails in and around communities that they've never done before. Now, they are doing it on a regular basis. They are seeing more parts of our province that they probably never would have seen. That's good.

I also would be remiss if I didn't speak to our seniors, our seniors clubs. We have an aging population. Some of our senior clubs have been hugely affected by COVID because some of their activities, they look forward to on a weekly, on a monthly basis, for many of them it's their only way to get out and have some form of socialization.

Hats off to our seniors clubs. I do hope that all these clubs – they're starting to come out of the COVID haze, we'll say, starting to move back to some sense of normal, starting to see people get out and about more. We're not there yet but, hopefully, we will be.

I'm sure there are groups I've missed and I'm sure there are groups in other communities that I haven't mentioned. Regardless of COVID or not, where would we be without our volunteers? We would be spending a hell of a lot more

money to keep some activities going. Our communities certainly wouldn't be as well off as they are now if we didn't have our community groups.

I think I can speak for most here in the House: We miss them. Because most of us get out and attend community events and speak at community groups. We might have a game of cards, a game of darts, whatever, with these groups. It will be nice and I'm looking forward to a time when we can get back and do some of the things that we have done in the past, because where would we be without them? They deal with specific needs. They address physical issues, social issues, mental and spiritual issues within our communities. I just want to make sure I covered off what our volunteers and essential workers have done for us during COVID. It doesn't go unappreciated.

I just want to move on to some issues within my own district, some that are very specific; some of the things I've heard during the election campaign, either when we were able to go to the doors and physically distance and have a chat or on the phone. Of course, through Topsail - Paradise, Route 60 through Topsail has been an issue that I've raised many times in this House. I'm on the third responsible minister now, so hopefully three strikes and I'll get a pothole filled.

It's actually a little bit more than just a pothole; it's a major thoroughfare. A lot of traffic goes through there. It's a safety concern, as well. Some of those potholes were filled earlier in the year, some of those major areas, but I see a lot of them are wearing through again. I think we need to look at a more permanent solution, as permanent as asphalt can be. I'm going to continue to push that issue to get Route 60 through Topsail brought up to par. There are some sections in it that are acceptable, but there are some sections that are really deteriorating. For safety concerns, we need to be looking at those.

I had some great chats with licensed practical nurses and some nurses while campaigning. They spoke to me a lot about the shortage of family doctors and how they could help alleviate some of the pressure. It was only on the news the other day, I think they were on talking about

LPNs having their own clinics and such. I'm hoping that government and all of us can have a chat on that and work to come up with other means to help alleviate the pressures on our family physicians.

I also had some great chats with parents and teachers speaking to some mental illness concerns within the schools. One parent who has a child who has ADHD, very concerned about the lack of accommodations for students who are struggling with different mental issues. I think that's something we need to look at.

Interesting enough, when talking with her she used a practical analogy or comparison of how we deal with mental health in this province. She made the comment: I know we have a lot of apps and phone lines and ways to call in on things, but her main concern was about long-term solutions or long-term programs and services. She used the analogy – this is paraphrasing her as well – if she had gone into an emergency centre with a broken arm or a broken leg, she would be looked after. She would leave that emergency centre with a cast, with her bones put back in the right place and, potentially, with either a wheelchair or some crutches.

Her comparison to mental health – and she speaks from the point of view of her own daughter – when she brings her daughter into an emergency room or an emergency centre of a hospital, she says she goes in there and she's given a website to go to or she's given a phone number to call and sent on her way. She said: In comparison, that's not a wheelchair. That's not crutches. She don't know what it is when she goes out the door with a child who has a long-term mental health issue.

There are lots of things we've done there, and she admits to that in terms of the call centres, the phone numbers you can call and so on, but there is certainly a need for a little bit of a more long-term solution or long-term program that services these individuals. I know it's been brought up in this House and it's been noted before in the media by different people about maybe it's time to have a department that's fully dedicated to our mental health issues.

Again, I'm hoping we'll have a greater discussion on that tomorrow when we discuss our private Member's resolution because some of the facts and the figures around mental health are huge. She stated to me one figure, she said we have about 64,000 to 65,000 school-age kids, K-12 and statistics show around 11 per cent of them have mental health issues. That equates to about 7,000 kids. But we also know from other agencies reporting that upwards to 70 per cent – in the high 60s – of kids with mental health issues go unreported or they're not identified.

So when you have 7,000 children out of 65,000 kids who are identified with mental issues and you look at why there's probably another 70 per cent not reporting, that's a huge number. That's a huge number. We need to be looking at that. Again, I do acknowledge that there are help lines out there for this. This is becoming a bigger issue, especially in the wake of COVID. We need to start acting on it and acting quicker.

Another thing I brought up that became an issue while we were campaigning – and I'm happy that our caucus had a meeting with the Health Accord, Dr. Parfrey and Sister Elizabeth Davis, because that was encouraging, talking about health over illness and looking at the outcomes.

I'm glad to see that yes there's money in this year's budget for insulin pumps, but some of the other concerns around diabetes, which is a huge issue here in the province, were around –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**P. DINN:** – continuous glucose monitoring devices. I'm hopeful that we'll soon get a report from Health and Community Services on this in terms of whether it's a doable thing or not. From the people I've spoken with, it certainly is a positive in their lives, as they're able to monitor their glucose levels on a continuous basis. They're able to participate in society to a greater degree and they're able to prevent more complicated issues in relation to their diabetes.

That brings me to another issue related. During the campaign, I was able to take a Zoom call with some students from the faculty of medicine at our university. It was very encouraging that

these young students who are moving into the medical profession have taken the time – and I think they do it on a regular basis, they pick a topic to champion.

This particular topic they were championing, the medical boots or diabetic boots, correct me if I am wrong but they essentially are worn to relieve the pressure when a diabetic is having foot issues and it helps prevent amputations. So think about it, a person participating in society, participating in our communities, is going to do so if they're full bodied. But once they lose a limb or limbs, as these students have indicated that could be preventable, we're taking away their lifestyle. We're also taking them out of the community in terms of they may have to leave their job; they may not be able to do things they did all along.

There's that but some of the data they provided to me – and I mentioned it in the House of Assembly the other day – they estimate that for an amputation, it costs somewhere around \$74,000, \$75,000. Then, there are the supports and everything after it. I stand to be corrected but I think their dollar figure to bring in a program that provides these devices to diabetics as a preventative measure would cost somewhere between \$1.1 million and \$1.6 million. The actual cost savings by avoiding amputations and keeping people active in their communities and in their jobs would be somewhere in the range of \$5 million to \$6 million a year. So it is something we should consider.

I have a lot more to say but Mr. Speaker has his mask off and he is waiting to call me to order, so I'll leave it at that.

Thank you for your time.

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

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again for recognizing me and giving me an opportunity to speak on the budget and a few issues concerning the district and some things that can be done.

Again, I thank the people from Humber - Bay of Islands for their support and the continued hard work. I know the Member for Topsail was talking about all the volunteers. I agree that all the volunteers around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and in Humber - Bay of Islands is no different; the great work that they do. The first responders, the seniors groups, the animal groups, the recreation groups, church groups – you can go on and you can spend a full day just naming off all the groups. Thanks for recognizing that and the first responders.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to speak a bit first about the district itself for a little while, just talk about the Bay of Islands itself. I know a lot of people don't realize this, but one of the biggest – if not the biggest – industries around there is the fishery. There are actually, right now, three fish plants that are operating. They're working well together. They're under the Barry Group.

Like I've said before, there are times you may have your differences with Bill Barry; there are times you're going to have a difference of opinion with Bill Barry. You express it, Bill will express it and the Barry Group will express it, but you have to give credit for the employment that's being created in the area and throughout Humber - Bay of Islands. It's a thing that over the years has gradually built up. It's built up to the point now where it is definitely the major industry in Humber - Bay of Islands. You have to recognize that and you have to recognize the workers that are there, the fisher people that work at the fisheries in Humber - Bay of Islands and all throughout.

Now, with the ownership of the three plants, you can see people from Cox's Cove driving across and working in Benoit's Cove and people in there stocking or (inaudible) fish in Cox's Cove. People from Curling on the south shore will go over to Cox's Cove also, so it's working out well. There are great plans there; you can see the great expansions that are happening in the area. This is a tribute to the Barry Group and a tribute to the workers that work there also, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to speak for a few minutes about the budget. I'm just going to go on with a few things that you hear during the election. First of all, when you get government

into a situation – and we talk about restraint – and you put 18 Cabinet ministers in Cabinet, then you tell everyone else: Well, b’y, we have to have restraint –

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

**E. JOYCE:** Sixteen and the Premier is 17?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No.

**E. JOYCE:** No? Sixteen, sorry. I stand to be corrected – 16. It is 16 I have to put there. It is a huge number.

You can always pick and choose. I look at the Member for Burin - Grand Bank; he’s a great leader in his community. I dealt with the person personally; he would be a great Cabinet minister also and Burin Peninsula being left out of it.

I know the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay; he was a great minister also. It’s a tough situation but when you look at the increase in the size of Cabinet to 16 and then you tell everybody else around this province, well, we have to have restraint, there’s a bit of disconnect there, I say, to –

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

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

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

**E. JOYCE:** I hear the Member opposite saying to me: You’re 100 per cent correct. I know I’m correct.

Mr. Speaker, I usually say what the facts are. Any logical person out there would say we have to tighten our belts, but not us; we can expand our Cabinet. We can just take it and put people in the Cabinet and make it expand.

I just explain that part. I just mentioned the Member for the Burin Peninsula and that I worked with him well. I’m sure he’ll get his turn in Cabinet. It’s sad that the Burin Peninsula was left out. I have to say that because I know there is a lot happening in that area. I worked with the mayor when he was the mayor. He’s a great advocate for his district; he’s a great person. I can assure you when he gets his teeth into a

bone or an issue for his district he doesn’t let go, I can assure you of that. I just want to recognize that of the Member because we dealt well.

What I like most about the Member – and I’m just giving credit to government Members here, credibility to the Members that aren’t in Cabinet. You can sit down and have a frank discussion with the Member and two minutes later, he’s out buying you a beer or a Coke. I recognize that. The same thing with the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and his expertise there also. I just want to recognize that because we worked so well together over a number of years.

Mr. Speaker, you have the 911 coming back into government. There’s another one I’d like to put on the table: the MMSB. We always hear the issues across the province about waste management and other issues. MMSB was done and the last minute it was stopped. It was a great decision, if government – someone – could reconsider that somewhere along the way to bring MMSB back in so we can have control.

A lot of the reasons back over the years that people set up boards, agencies and commissions was to protect government from any fault that happened in the area. If government is making the decision and releasing the funds to boards, agencies and commissions, they should take the responsibility. Bringing it back into government, Mr. Speaker, not only would it help with efficiencies, but it would also take more responsibility by government so it could be in line with the government’s aims, goals and objectives, not have their aims, goals and objectives and the MMSB, or some board or agency, have their own.

That is one, Mr. Speaker, I would like for government to reconsider, to bring it in under their umbrella and bring it into a government department. It should be done. It was almost done before. I’m not going to get into the reasons for why it wasn’t done, the same with the 911. It was signed off to be done. But it will help because we hear so many issues about the waste management across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have waste management in St. John’s. The east is going well, but in the Burin Peninsula they want their own site. They feel that they can

save funds, people can save money, by having a site down on the Burin Peninsula instead of shipping it all the way up to Robin Hood Bay. They did a study which showed that, actually showed that, but because it's one big umbrella and because the umbrella happens to be the Eastern Regional Service Board, they're saying, no, no, no, no, they're not doing it.

I know the work that people have done on the Burin Peninsula. I know the reports that they have. I know they –

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

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

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

**E. JOYCE:** And they should be shipping it from Clarenville to the Burin Peninsula, the Member is saying, from Clarenville.

There are ways that once you get into government, you can sit down and say: Okay, let's have a reasonable discussion here. I'm just using the Eastern Regional Service Board now. When you get in that and you have this infrastructure built, you have to feed that infrastructure and you need to keep the money rolling in. You need to keep it because you have the infrastructure built. You need to keep the wages.

They're doing a great job, no doubt, but you're looking at how to help municipalities in the long run. If it's feasible to set up a waste management site in the Burin Peninsula, why not do it? If it's going to be safe, if it's going to be environmentally safe and if it's going to save funds for the municipalities, which in turn will save funds for the residents of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – mainly from the Burin Peninsula – why not do it? When it's not inside government, it's hard to get that decision changed.

I'm just hoping that the MMSB, Mr. Speaker, will be put back into government so that government can have more say and they can sit down and listen to the hard-working volunteers, like the Burin Peninsula, to do this.

The Member from Clarenville just said instead of bringing it all to St. John's, we could bring the waste from his area down the Burin Peninsula. Same distance. When you get the road, it's 150 kilometres to St. John's, 150 down the Burin Peninsula. Same distance. Is it cheaper? I don't know, but that's something that could be looked at.

When this strategy was put in place, it was back in 2003. Then, when it finally started to be developed in 2004-2005 it just went off and then all of a sudden people got the big infrastructure. I know out in Gander, out in Norris Arm, same thing: They have this huge infrastructure. Now they have to feed it.

I see the minister listening attentively. I hope MMSB is going to be brought back into government. I really, really, truly do. We need to get the issues of waste management back under control where you can sit down and instead of everybody looking at their own little spot – what can we do – look at it as a provincial waste management strategy. I have confidence that the minister can do it. I just hope that the government is going to bring them back. We know that a few of us that were around had it done before. Only had to be stopped at the last minute and we can't get any of the details, and I won't get into the details, but I think that would be another great initiative to bring it back into government.

Because when you bring back waste management and you develop a great waste-management strategy you're affecting every household in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. If we can reduce cost, that's reducing costs for the municipalities; that's less that every household will have to pay for waste management in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I just want to throw that out there.

I brought up today, Mr. Speaker, in Question Period, something that was on my mind. I wasn't really prepared for questions. There was a bit of a foul-up there on questions. The buildings around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I just know out our way, just our way alone, the number of vacant schools. The number of schools and other buildings that are in place, municipal buildings, buildings that belong to or are under control of Transportation and

Infrastructure, not only are the buildings there not being used – and I don't know if they can be used for any economic development or for some reason for the municipality – but we're paying the maintenance, heat and light on the buildings. We're not even sure if they can ever be used again, will ever be used again, but we're still carrying it.

I know back in 2016 we started that process again. I was part of it, and I didn't follow through on it. I take part of that responsibility that it wasn't followed through. We were pushing through it and, whatever happened, it fell off the rail.

But I just ask the Members, especially in the rural areas or even some in around St. John's: How many vacant buildings do you know that are Transportation and Infrastructure? You're saying: Well, we can't get rid of it. If you can't get rid of the building, but you're still paying maintenance – you've got no use for the building – isn't it better to find some way that you can put it in for economic development in the area so at least you would be cutting down on the expenses of heat, light and maintenance?

That is a big issue. That is a big issue. I'm going on memory, Mr. Speaker, but back in 2016 I think we were going to bring in \$50 million at the time. That is a big expense that we could save.

Mr. Speaker, I know it was brought up today about the all-terrain legislation. Before I get into that and talk about it all, I just want to say to the minister and her staff that I have been dealing with personally on some issues. The minister is very open to helping people out in the district. I have to recognize that. Many times I contacted the minister in her office and she was very receptive to help out where she can and her staff where they can, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to recognize that.

I urge the department to get this all-terrain vehicle legislation in as soon as possible. I know it is a complicated issue and I know there were times, Mr. Speaker, when I know the former premier said it was ready to go. I don't think it was. I know a former minister said it was ready to go. I don't think it was. I think it was being pushed off, but I have confidence in the minister

that she will bring in a piece of legislation that – oh, I would love to have a bottle of water, yes.

It is pretty good, Mr. Speaker, when everybody wants you to keep speaking and they're giving you water.

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

**E. JOYCE:** I thank the Member for Ferryland for that.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister: I really believe that you will get it done. I don't believe the work that was put out in the public back in 2018-2019 was even done. I really truly believe that. Because when you keep saying, yes, it's done, we're ready to bring it in and after two or three years it's not done, I don't think it was done. I urge the minister to work on that. I know she is and the staff. I know the staff is great over there, to work on that. Anything I can do to support it, I definitely will.

Another issue that was brought up throughout the district – and I'm involved with it a small bit – is animal legislation. I know the minister is very much involved with that. I know when it was done back in – I think it had to be 2011-2012, when it was brought in, the intent was there but it went sideways. I know some of the intent.

I'll just ask the general public: If your resources are strained for safety around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – the hypothetical situation, anyone – if you have someone who is in distress, a car accident, what's going to take a priority, to go to that car accident, go to that very stressful situation if someone makes a 911 call or go help an animal? Of course, it's going to be the individual. That's why we need to put the constable back into the SPCA. They do a lot of great work.

They work well with the RNC and the RCMP. We have to put the legislation back in. We have groups across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that actually want to do the work. I say to the minister that is such a big issue that's not brought to the forefront. I urge the minister to work on that. I was involved with the previous legislation.



I remember back then there were funds supposed to be put out for education and it wasn't. It wasn't even put out for the education of the new legislation. A lot of times when the volunteers would call the RCMP they weren't even aware of the legislation at the beginning because there was no promotion on the legislation. That's something I say to the minister that I would work with you also on that because it's a very important issue. I hear it all the time. I'm down to the SPCA; I've walked many dogs from the SPCA. It's not just Corner Brook, all across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that this would help.

Mr. Speaker, if there's another issue that I would bring up that I heard throughout the election is a shortage of doctors. I know Western Health is recruiting and all health authorities are recruiting. I can assure you we can try our best, but the concerns that are being raised are real. There are people out there without doctors. I know there's no magic bullet. If the Liberals were in there, PCs or NDP, it would be a struggle. I just want to raise that concern for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially the people that I've been speaking to during the election. I just want to raise that. I know the minister is listening attentively to it, and I just thank the minister for that because it's such an important issue.

Another thing – and I know the minister is hearing this over the last number of days – is rate mitigation. This is something that people are concerned about. This is something that people are raising to us in concern. It's something that is real. What can be done to the negotiations – and I'll look forward to that and getting a positive result on all of that. That is the concern of a lot of people. Every second door that I knocked on in the last election, that is what they were bringing up.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that I'm glad that was in the budget was broadband and cellphone coverage. It is important. That is a good economic benefit to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I see the Minister of Industry over there saying to me: Great job. I know, because I've been raising this issue for a number of years. The first time it was done and the government put it in was when I raised it, and you remember when I raised it. It started

from there. This year there's even more put in. I recognize that for the government. It's going to be great for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that.

First of all, again, I'd like to thank the constituents of the Ferryland District for putting me here. It's a great privilege and honour to be able to sit here and speak in the House.

After being here now for the last – well, we're here since last week, I guess, but sometimes going early when you're getting to speak on the budget items and speak to what you want, going early is not always a good thing because sometimes you have 20 minutes and you forget to touch on some item.

I've been sitting here listening attentively to all the people that have spoken and made some notes and jot some notes on how it affects my district; going early doesn't always pay off.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The level of conversation is getting a little loud.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** So this is another crack to get at it and be able to speak to some points.

First of all, going back to COVID, I'd like to throw out kudos to all the truck drivers, the nurses, the grocery store workers, the rotational workers and all the food establishments in my district and, I'm going to say, in the province. They did a great job. Certainly, the nurses and truck drivers and the people that kept us fed and they keep those stores open. Also, to rotational workers suffering through what they're still suffering through – rotations – and also having to isolate when they get home. I certainly throw out a big bouquet to that group.

To touch on Newfoundland Power – I know that the minister answered questions this morning, we don't want to get in the middle of it – they could put forth a proposal to have no tax increases for the people of the province. They know what kind of a situation we're in here in the province.

When I heard the Member for St. John's Centre speak there earlier on it, when he brought up seniors; that's a big issue. When you say Newfoundland Power is going to raise their rates. It's going to affect the seniors. It's just amazing how much they're going to dig into their income that they have.

I was hoping to be able to get home first because when I was knocking on doors, a lady came out and she was that ticked off that she gave me a list of her income – of what she gets on her pension. By the time the end of the month comes, or when she did out the budget, she had \$58 left at the end of the month for something that she could say that she could spend; \$58 she had left with all her expenses.

Now, you throw in a light and power increase here. That's just one senior that put it on herself to do that, do her budget. A lot of people are not going to sit down and do that, but \$58. I took that home, I still have that home on my bureau. I know I should have it here today because I would love to be able to go down and quote the numbers on it. I wasn't expecting to speak this afternoon so I said I'd get it for tomorrow. Anyway, I had to jump in here today and do it.

Just looking at that and just reflecting back on it when I knocked on the doors. I got home, I said \$58 after all your expenses is not a lot to live on. You take any slight increase for those people, those seniors, it's something that is really going to affect them.

I went to a wake the other day in my district. When I was leaving the parking lot she said: Don't let up on the group for Newfoundland Power. Make sure you protest against that. Little did I know, until we asked the questions, how it all worked, that it's not something that we're into or the government can stop. It's a board that acts on – from Newfoundland Power. It's something that they have to sit down and do. Their hands are not in it, but somehow when the

people are asking you, you still have to bring it up. It's something in your district that you have to pay attention to.

I thought it was something that, if she's saying it to me, how many other people are thinking that in the district? We don't need any more increases. They just really don't. The seniors do not need increases. They have trouble enough as it is to be doing what they're doing. They just don't need it. I think there is some way, shape or form in the next few years, in the next budget, that maybe they get some sort of a tax break, maybe they're exempt at 70 years old for some of these tax breaks; that their living amount they have doesn't change. So this goes up, that tax goes up, then the municipal taxes goes up, so they're going to pay everywhere. If all of this goes everywhere, then they're the ones who are going to pay as well, and they're on a fixed income and that doesn't change.

During COVID I think they got two \$500 increments of an increase – I think that's what it was, and I'm just quoting that; I might be wrong on that; two \$500 increments is not a lot. That's \$1,000 over a year and a half and with the increase of food and the increase of lumber, I don't know how they survive, to be truthful. It's something we should look at.

I listened to the Member for Exploits today talking about Crown lands. It's not the number one complaint but it's a big issue in every single district, and I'm going to say on government side and our side. Why does it take so long? Why is it that we can't get this right? I just don't understand why it takes two to five years to get a piece of Crown land figured out. If you go ask a question it's 90 days. Yeah, 90 days my – no, I won't say it. It's nowhere close to 90 days – nowhere close.

A constituent called me the other day, he put in his application, so I'm going to follow that to see how close that is and see where it's going to go. But 90 days, yeah, I doubt it. I told him: Don't get too excited, or don't go putting down any lumber yet or go buy anything yet because you're going to be a while, in my mind. Now, I would like to see that process and see how it goes. Ninety days, yeah. Well, let's hope that it will be 90 days. There's not one person who called me and said: B'y, thanks, we got that

done in 90 days. That's hasn't happened and I've been two years.

Somebody has got to sit, look at and figure out what the problem is with the system. I don't know the answers. I'm sitting here, I don't know the answers and you learn more every day you're in here. There's a lot of knowledge in here. Somebody has to be able to sit down and get to the crux of what the problem is. Do I know what it is? No. But we should be able to figure that out. We have enough ministers, deputy minister and MHAs here that we should be able to figure that issue out. Do you know what? If you fix it, it goes away. If there's an extenuating circumstance that draws it into a year or two, then fine, you live with it. But that process should not take that long.

It's very disappointing, too. You think you come in here and you're going to help, and nothing changes. That's why I would like to see government look at the simple things. Get these small things out of the way and it will make life a lot easier for you in the long run, I think. You know, some of the stuff that you get calls on, if we could just simplify – you sit there, you listen and you said: B'y, yeah, that don't make a lot of sense. And it still continues on. You come in and talk about it, you ask that they go ahead and solve that problem, and there could be a good answer to the problem, but most times not. You sit down and the problem – well, there's no legislation coming through to change it. So sometimes it's disappointing that it's not done. Hopefully, we get to that.

Back to Newfoundland Power, I'm not going to dwell on that too much, but looking at the arenas. You're talking about jumping the rate on arenas or jumping the rate in Newfoundland Power –

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

I'm thinking on the Newfoundland Power increase and how it affects – I'll just use an arena as an example. I have two, one in the Goulds and one in Mobile. When they increase the rate, you know where that's going to go: The rate increases for them are going to be passed on to people that are renting the arenas, whether it

be the minor hockey, so the parents are going to pay more. They have to; there's no other choice.

The light bill for an arena is right now at \$8,000 a month. If they have the meter read at the end of the year when they close, right after Easter holidays, they get a meter reading and they don't want the day after the meter is read, because they're going to get charged that pile of money. There's a reason why they close down at a certain point in time.

They got together this year, both arenas, and after COVID hit there in February or March, whenever it was – February, I think – the arenas shut down. Between the two of them, they agreed to put the ice back on one of the arenas and they moved on for another six weeks, I think.

When you look at the increase in the electricity rate, it goes to the arena, like I said, and then it's going to be passed down to the parents and passed down to the other groups that are there. It's disheartening sometimes when you see that. Again, the pay is going to go up for the users on the other end. People aren't thinking about electricity. Kids are in minor hockey; they're in any sports. If they're indoor facilities that are paying electricity, then it's getting passed down. If they're going to pay more, then it's getting passed down the line. People have to look at that and Newfoundland Power should be looking at that.

We come out with a budget and we hear the negative stuff. We try to keep it positive, but when it's that way, they should look at that and, okay, let's have a reprieve. If it's every three years, if they're making a profit, let's look at it for three years and let's freeze it for three years. We're trying to get our deficit back in order, so maybe they can help the individuals in the province do that.

Just driving in from my district – and I don't know which minister I'll be speaking to on this when I speak of it – when you're driving through some of the districts, and I look at the signage that's around – 15 kilometres to here or 25 kilometres to there. Driving from Bay Bulls, or I was up to Fermeuse the other day and drove back down and came into town, if you look at the signage at the side of the road – and I'm not

saying there's anything wrong with it, but there are a lot of signs that –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The level of conversation is getting too loud.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you.

There are a lot of signs on the road that are rotting. There are pieces gone off the side. I know there's just one out here when you come down off the Outer Ring to come down here on the back. There is a sign there that's covered in brush, but it's cracked off on the side that you can't see what's on it, and it's rotted out.

Just looking at some of the signage when you drive across the Island. I'm thinking if they listen on the other side – everybody has some good suggestions. When you get these metal signs above Gushue Highway, direction to get off at this ramp and it's all metal up on the thing. I think over the long haul, yes, it might cost you more to do it now but there's no more maintenance on it after it's done. Unless somebody goes along and spray paints it like they're doing on a lot of this stuff.

With the signs that I see, a lot of them are rotting out. Now, whether it's the plywood underneath that's rotting out or just the sign itself. I'm not sure if that's painted on or how it's done. You have tourists coming here, there are people driving these roads everyday. I just wonder do they notice it. Do somebody call in and say, well, this sign is bad, this sign is rotted. It's a tourism industry here – yes, I know it's been shut down for the last year and half. No better time to fix it than right now, to get it done before tourists come back here. You come back here and the sign is broke off, 25 kilometres could be left and you don't know if there are 50 or 20 or 30, you don't know what it is, it's cracked off.

Just driving along this morning I said: B'y I got to bring that up when I get the next opportunity to speak on that because it's something that really should be looked at.

During the year we had some issues in our schools along the way with some – I had one concerned parent call me that had some issues with his daughter in school. The trouble that

they have in the district where we're to is the RCMP doesn't have enough resources to handle the calls that they get or spend enough time at it. I know that's a federal jurisdiction; I know that the provincial government do have some hands in on that as well, I'm sure it's provincially shared. It's something that we should be looking at to give these people more resources, more money to be able to do what they're trying to do. That would be very important.

That's just one issue. When you look at that, it's disturbing that the police will say that. They do need more resources and they're looking for them. They haven't got them. Unless it comes from federal, down to provincial, it's something that I really think we should be looking at.

The Member for St. John's Centre, when I heard him talk about self-checkouts – maybe him, I think it was. Again, that's another one of my pet peeves. I worked in service for 12 years and in the car industry for 10, selling cars. It was all about service. There's nothing better than when you call – you all have vehicles, you're all going to breakdown at some point in time. When you call these dealerships, the first thing you're getting is a recording: press one for sales, two for service and three for this. Drive you crazy. Just somebody answer the bloody phone so you can get a hold of somebody. You're only trying to figure out if your car is ready or if you're going to get a car fixed or if you're going to buy a car.

That's only the car industry. You call a government agency: one for this, two for that. It's so self-automated that it's unbelievable. Everybody here would nod their head and say yes to that. I know that you've called places, but can they just speak to somebody.

I'll use Rogers or Bell: about seven or eight different numbers you have to call to get a hold. You just want to speak to somebody, tell them your issue. They should be able to direct you on, instead of waiting for eight or nine numbers to be read out to which section you want to go in. Then after listening to seven or eight, neither one of them is what you have the problem with.

Self-checkout, I don't know, I just don't believe in it. I'll skip them at Canadian Tire. I'll make someone serve me. Because that's a job that we

need and people need to be working. Self-checkouts, for me, I don't do it unless that's the only thing – well, if you go to Shoppers Drug Mart you might have no choice if that's the only thing there. When you go to Canadian Tire you have a choice: go to self-checkout or the choice to go to the counter. I'll go to the counter. There might be a lineup, but you know what? That person is working and that helps us here.

Like I said, I worked for 22 years at it, and the last seven or eight years everything is automated and this and that and emails. If you want to price a car, they send you an email. There's no more – I'm not going to say no more, but there are people that say: Well, just respond by email. They don't want to talk to you.

I guess that's the way society is going, but I don't know. I have trouble with it, I have to tell you. I really do. It's just troublesome that it's putting people out of work, in my mind, when you do these automated lines.

Another topic that in my area has been ongoing now in the last year or two – I'm going to say, in Central in Terra Nova District and going out Western, they have the ATV trails and the Ski-Doo trails which are groomed. Great. And it's awesome. It brings a lot of revenue into the area.

Where I live there, obviously, the whole Island had a railway track that ran through somebody's community along this Island. That's the way it was at one point. Just in my area alone there are people talking about having ATV trails going from Petty Harbour to be able to come up and cross over and to go through Bay Bulls, go to Witless Bay Line, join Cape Broyle to be able to go up and get on your quad or your ATV. We're not looking to go in and tear up the country, but we have a forest road there that could join in somewhere and get people talking about it. You could join this community and you get on your quad and you drive for an hour and you go in and have a meal at a restaurant in Cape Broyle or a restaurant in Calvert.

They have an East Coast Trail and on the West Coast they do it great out there. I think they do, anyway. And in Central as well they have the railway beds they use and they're kept up. But in our area that's not the case. I have a son-in-law who's living in Bay Bulls now who came from

Glovertown and he said: We have nowhere to go on the bikes. There's nowhere to go. I think it would be a great idea and we're going to push it a little bit. But there are rules; there are places you have to go. You have to go through Forestry; you have to go through here.

I think dealing with that is something that we could really touch on and be able to generate more revenue, along with tourism, there are people who leave here and say: Why don't we get a bike ride and let's go down to Placentia and right down to Argentea or drop the bikes of there and go down. It's a great idea. In our area that's something that we should improve on to try to do. I guess that there's going to be some groups that are going to be pushing that, and I hope they do. Hopefully, we'll be able to help them in that as well.

I guess one of the few things I'll touch on before I finish: We were talking about all our resources and I heard the Member for Torngat Mountains talk about it. We've had every industry here that the rest of Canada would love to have: We have fishing. We have oil. We have mining. I'm probably going to miss a couple but we end up giving them all away so I just hope – and I'm not saying we give them away. We started with Churchill Falls. We have no rights now until 2041. I hope it doesn't happen with Muskrat Falls that we're going to give it away in order to fund it. Somehow we have to find a way not to give it away.

We sit here and we listen – and I heard the Member again today; I keep quoting him – every time we speak – I haven't voted on Muskrat Falls. I'm here two years. It is time to move past that. No one ever mentions that the PC government brought in the oil and that's where you're getting all your revenues to and running your government. I'm listening to that; it is an important piece. We're not going to throw that out there, but we sit here and listen to Muskrat Falls; that's old. I'm tired of listening to it. If I was somewhere else, I'd be trying to take care of it. If I was in a different venue, I'd take of it, for sure, when there are fellas at you, I can tell you that. Not here.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** I'm not very big but I don't mind saying it.

When you get to these issues and you're talking about Muskrat Falls, it is just so annoying, and I think we have to move on past it. Again, it is just something that we have to do. That is the way it goes.

Also, I'll speak on teachers just for a second and we'll just touch on that. They've gone through a hard time. They've persevered through COVID, and sometimes they can't speak. There are teachers in the system and they are not permitted to speak out. They have a president that speaks for them, but they don't get on the radio. They're not permitted because they would be scolded, but who better to ask?

It flabbergasted me, to be truthful, sometimes, some of the stuff that they go through. We have a Member here in front of me that his wife is a teacher and they're frustrated. They go out and they have to put a mask on and go teach. Then their kids can't go somewhere else because of some other rule. Listen, I understand those rules, but sometimes they have to change. Just look at the situation.

We've had all kinds. Everybody has constituents that have had this happened. For whatever reason, you say: Well that doesn't make a lot of sense; maybe they can look at it. But it is what it is.

The last one I'll touch on will be waste management facilities. We have one in Bay Bulls. There is one further up; there are two more up the shore, I'm going to call it, in our area. COVID is getting dragged down now. I'm running out of time. You go to a dump site, there are two people allowed in. You go down the road to a supermarket, there are 25 allowed in. It doesn't matter how many are in there; there's a restriction. I just think that it's something that we could look at and something that we could change in a waste management facility to be able to get more people to be able to go in there.

Anyway, thank you for your time. Thank you so much.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, it's a privilege to speak in this House representing my beautiful District of Labrador West. It's home. It's a unique spot in this province. We're north and west of here. It's a different place, but it's home.

I spoke already two other times here. I've talked about different issues and different things that my constituents are worried about. The biggest one – I'll go back to it first again – is seniors. We have a unique population of seniors. Our community was never really built to accommodate seniors, being a company town and all. They want to stay. It's their home. Many of them were either brought there as small children or born there. We've gone through the cycle of multiple generations now.

Labrador West is a place now where people are born and raised and want to stay. Its existence in this province has been very short in the huge history of this province, but it's a place now that is entrenched. It's going to be there for a while. After many of my conversations with the mining industry over the last little while, they're going to be there for quite some time yet. The iron ore reserves are large and plenty, not like mining communities in other places. This is somewhere that's going to be on the map for quite some time. We really need to start paying attention to the seniors of Labrador West and their unique needs and challenges: their ability to access services, access to health care and access to different things.

I know the minister today announced the plan for community transport and stuff like that. Thankfully, one of the first groups to actually apply for that when it was still – now the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs and Indigenous Affairs. She was there at the time. It was one of the first places to actually apply for that program and they have a seniors' bus. It's one step closer to some freedom and some accessibility for seniors. But we still have more to do. We still have a long road to go down and we really need to take it and run with it. I'm hoping that we can continue to accommodate

seniors, help them out so they can enjoy their retirement and their older age.

I look at my great-grandmother. She lived into her 90s, but there wasn't really seniors' stuff then. She didn't have access to programs and stuff like that. Now you see seniors today out in the community, out and about. They're very active. It's very nice to see people in their 70s and 80s still going and doing things and going with a sense of independence and ability. It's great to see, but we need to make sure that we continue to help them prosper and enjoy their retirement from work and the worries and stress that come with that stuff. Let's help our seniors; let's do the best we can for them so they can continue to enjoy their retirement and their golden years.

Moving on to seniors housing, what's it going to look like in the future? How are we going to do it? There are so many different things out there. There are so many different levels of care. Something we really need to take and look at is. Seniors should not be living in large, multi-bedroom houses that were originally built for raising children and stuff like that. They need different accommodations. They need something that they can look after and take care of and all of those things.

That's why I really think that we need to take a microscope and look at seniors housing for independent seniors, seniors that require care, different levels. We need to see how that looks and how we can best serve seniors in our communities and make sure that they have adequate housing, adequate service; that the house that they're in suits their needs and their ability. We really need to take a look at that. How do we provide it to seniors and get them in a place that's comfortable and can be looked after reasonably. We shouldn't have seniors in big, large houses with stairs and things like that. It doesn't suit their needs and it adds cumbersome and unnecessary burden to their life. Housing for seniors is very important and we need to look into it further and make sure that we have the ability to take care of this and go forward.

Even housing in general in this province, how do we provide housing? What does housing look like? The demographics of this province have

changed so dramatically in the last two decades and we need to make sure that the houses for low-income people, can they take care of it? Is it affordable? Is it efficient? With the changing dynamics of how do we heat our homes, how do we look after our homes – these things are all changing very rapidly. As a province we need to take a look at the housing needs, not just for low-income people, but for everybody. Is the housing adequate? Is what we're doing adequate? We need to start with low-income and work our way around that. Are we providing adequately for the changing dynamics of this province and the changing demographics of this province?

That goes back to affordability and what things cost. Prices in grocery stores are skyrocketing. The cost of goods and services is going through the roof. Partially for COVID, but it had been creeping up over the last number of years even before COVID. You just take a look at home in Labrador. We have seen dramatic increases in goods and services. It shouldn't be. I'm a 12-hour drive from Quebec City. Why are we getting burdened with transportation costs and that when goods are actually loaded in Quebec City and shipped to me in a 12-hour period?

What is really happening? What is really happening that is actually causing such significant increases in my region? The hon. Member for Lake Melville, it's the same thing. Why are our costs creeping up when we've actually increased accessibility to our region? It should be going the other way.

Then we go back to the Member for Torngat Mountains and look at the creeping-up costs for them too. What is actually happening? I think we need to actually take a closer look at food and why it is rising so much. Why are we getting these burdened costs when we look around us and see that we're actually opening up? We're actually getting better accessibility in some places. We need to stop and look at what's actually happening in the market and why is it happening in the market.

It's unfortunate that we are being burdened with such costs when we're building a – we had the Estimates from TI yesterday. We're talking about the Trans-Labrador Highway – well, the portion that is currently done – will be paved in

the next paving season, yet the cost of supplying goods to me is going up. It doesn't make any sense.

Then we also look at our counterparts on the Quebec side that connect the highway from us right to Quebec City. They are hoping to have their road paved in three paving seasons to have their road finished paving. There are not very many sections that are unpaved right now. Why are costs skyrocketing? And it was before COVID. You can say COVID now, but it was before COVID. We have to have a look at what is going on. Why are we being burdened?

The old joke in Lab West used to be, oh, the Labrador tax. Well, you know what? Accessibility has been improved. There should be no such thing as a Labrador tax anymore. This is gouging at its finest. We need to take a look at affordability for Labradorians right now. We should not have to be taxed for where we live. We have great accessibility now and we're going to have better accessibility, yet we look at the market and the cost of supplying us is skyrocketing. Let's call it what it is and call it gouging. We should be doing better.

Competitively, we should be better. There are no ferries to get into Labrador anymore if you're coming from the big hubs of marketing and the big hubs of distribution. It's on a truck and it's in Lab West, no ferries required. It's outrageous.

It goes into other things like connectivity. I know myself and the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology had a thing about telecoms. This provincial government invests into telecoms, but at the end of the day, they turn around and gouge us on our phone bills. We're providing grants and funding to these big telecom companies, but they're not providing a service that's affordable for people to use. We should be connecting our residents. We should have better connectivity with high-speed Internet, cellphone service. The marketplace is a global marketplace now. We're all connected.

We just go back to the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains and talked about there's only one cellphone tower in her district. It's only partially covering one community in her district. She talked about the aging infrastructure. Well, if this province is going to invest in

telecommunication infrastructure, the telecom that's coming in shouldn't be gouging the residents. Especially in a partnership that involves the federal government and the provincial government. Taxpayers' dollars are being used to build this infrastructure, but if they turn around and charge maximum charges to the residents, then it defeats the purpose of connectivity. We should be making it easier for people to access Internet. We should be making it easier for people to get a cellphone.

It goes back to people trying to find work and jobs. In today's industry, if you want a job, you need a cellphone or some phone to get the call for the interview. In a lot of cases now, they're requiring that you have your own vehicle.

These are things that we're seeing. The ability for people to get work and to be part of the community and a part of the marketplace. We're throwing up barriers. We throwing up barriers and making it harder and harder for people.

If we're going to invest into telecommunications, there has to be something we can do to tell these telecom companies: You know what? Enough is enough. Don't be charging outrageous prices for infrastructure that was paid for by tax dollars. We have to put an end to that. It's unfair to the marketplace and it's unfair to the residents of this province because it's becoming a problem. We're paying very expensive rates for things. How do we stay competitive if our residents are paying out the nose for services and goods?

A lot of times it has nothing to do with the taxes or anything that residents are paying. A lot of it is just the marketplace seems to feel that they have free rein to charge exorbitant things to the residents. When these come up, we really need to take a serious look at it and say enough is enough. Affordability in this province is really important. We need to make sure that we're protecting the residents of this province from gouging and from exorbitant rates and things. Sometimes they say it's outside of our control, but sometimes it is inside of our control, especially if you're getting grants from us, as a provincial government, or from the federal government. They shouldn't have the ability to just charge people exorbitant rates that are just outside of even the market norms.



Just take a quick look over at Saskatchewan. With SaskTel, they're paying a percentile in rates for Internet and cellphones that the rest of the country is paying. If they can do it, why can't we do it? Why can't we make sure that we keep things in the range of affordability but, also, at the same time, in the realms of normality that we're actually helping our residents achieve better.

That's what we want. We want our residents to achieve the best they possibly can. We have great infrastructure, we have great places of learning and we have great opportunities here, but we have to make sure that the residents of this province have the ability to access it; they have the ability to access great education and they have the ability to access great job markets.

We should make sure that there is not a barrier in place for a single resident. That if anyone wants to, they have the ability to get an education, they have an ability to try their best to get the great opportunities in job markets and ability to look after themselves and not have to worry about where is the next meal coming from. Can I afford to go to the grocery store? Can I afford to get supplies for my kids for school? These things, these questions that people ask themselves day to day shouldn't be questions they ask themselves. They should say: I will go to the store, I will get what I need and I should be fine. There should be no more worries than that.

That's what we have to do as a Legislature to make sure that we question these things, we question why things are costing so much and we question why transportation costs so much or anything costs so much. We have the ability to do it, we need to do it and make sure that everything is in place.

When we have these companies coming in and getting grants to provide a service, we should look at the service and go is it affordable? Is it going to make sure there's maximum access to people and maximum things for everybody? We have the ability to do it. Let's do it.

Another thing – speaking of access, ability and affordability – is transportation, especially airline transportation in Labrador West. We always struggled with the high cost of flights in

and out of Labrador. I'm sure the hon. Minister of Health has heard me many times talk about people trying to get flights from Labrador West to get to appointments. If you look at a last-minute flight – so someone gets an appointment, a specialist calls and says: I have room to get you in. You have to be here on Thursday and it's Monday. They call up the airline – \$1,600.

In what world is that affordable or reasonable for an individual to drop \$1,600? That's just for the flight. Sometimes, if they don't have any friends or family in St. John's, they still have to find a place to stay, a rental car, transportation: all these things need to be taken into consideration for an individual. So for someone to access a medical service that – thankfully, we have universal health care in this country, but to access it they still have to fork out \$4,000 or 5,000. It's unreasonable.

I know we have the Medical Transportation Assistance Program. There were some announcements around improving it and there is more funding for it, but if the policies on how it's administered don't change, then it doesn't really change, there is just more money in the pot. We have to say if someone gets a medical appointment to come into St. John's for something that is absolutely needed, there should be no upfront costs for air travel. If they were told they had to be in St. John's for medical reasons, then there should be something in place that the MTAP automatically kicks in. The upfront costs of their airline, to get from the clinic in Labrador West to the Health Sciences Centre in St. John's – when they step on that plane no credit card numbers were exchanged, it should be just saying get on the plane to go see that medical professional because we live in a world with universal health care.

Universal health care means there are no barriers in place for someone to receive medical care and that's what it should be. They shouldn't have to fork out \$1,600 to go and see a specialist that they're required to see, especially last minute. That happens so often I find. You're going to see your family doctor, if you're lucky to have one and say, you know what, you need to go see the specialist. There is something here, something showed up; we need you to go there as soon as possible.

Well, sometimes it's only four or five days away if they're lucky, yet spending \$1,600 on airline tickets just to go see a specialist – it could be really important. It's something that maybe really (inaudible). Even myself, I was in that boat at one time, where I walked in to my family doctor and four hours later, I get a call saying: Jordan, we need you in for surgery. So it happens.

We shouldn't be putting barriers in place for people to receive health care. It's all about affordability; \$1,600 for a last-minute flight to the Health Sciences Centre is unreal. Some people just can't drop that much cash. Especially with COVID and people stretched thin and different things like that, or people's personal situation, we shouldn't be putting these barriers in place.

I know, like they said, the MTAP is 50 per cent prepaid and for the residents of Labrador, \$1,000 and all that, but the application deadline for that is up to two weeks before your appointment. So if someone has to get out to St. John's in three or four days, they can't put in an application for that. That's immediate and there should be no barriers. We need to take away barriers from affordability and accessibility when it comes to seniors, when it comes to housing, when it comes to affordability and when it comes to medical transportation. These barriers are causing so many problems and grief in people's lives that we need to find every solution possible to remove them.

We want a society that is at its peak, at its pinnacle. We want people to be able to do what they want in the sense of education or of job opportunities and stuff like that. We want people to be at their best. We want to give people opportunities at their best. We have some great people in this province; we have some great ingenuity.

I always say we're some of the cleverest people in the world. We can fix anything and I've witnessed it. There are people around this province – you find the right person, they can fix anything. This is where we need to take that and grasp that great ingenuity that we have as a people and go further. But if we keep putting barriers in place and remove opportunities from

people, it's going to get harder. I think we have opportunities.

Before I go, I just want to talk about – I'm a person who enjoys the environment. My happy place is just walking through the woods with a fishing pole or a rifle, enjoying the outdoors in this province. We have some great opportunities there. I think it's important that we look at climate change, we tackle it head-on and we make the right investments in stuff that protect our environment but also provide opportunities.

I'm looking forward to what we can do as a people to tackle climate change, to change the way we think and take the opportunities that we have to improve our environment, improve quality of life and give more people the opportunity to do things, like I like to do and enjoy nature, enjoy the outdoors, take a stroll through the woods. We want to make sure we protect it and protect everything that makes our environment so great.

Before I go, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone. I want to thank the residents of Labrador West for all of their faith that they put in me.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** I remind the Member his time has expired.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure, once again, to speak on the budget. On a money bill, as we always say, you can speak about whatever you want. We're hearing a lot said around the House, and I think it's good to hear Members talk about their districts and the issues that are important to them. When 40 of us represent the province there are a lot of different issues that are spread across this province and what's a big issue in one district may not be as important in other districts, and we hear that every day and we heard it today.

My colleague from Exploits was talking about Crown lands issues being big in his own district. I don't get a lot of that. There is not a lot of Crown land in my district. What's there is not a big issue, it's a smaller point. He's out in an area where there's a lot of former Abitibi land and there's a lot of cabin country.

Back in the day when I worked in Crown Lands, actually with the former minister, we dealt with a lot of Crown lands issues. Actually, ironically, we dealt with that same district. It's unique to the province. That's one area where you say it's unique. I guess there were some calls – fair enough, it's all fair play about that being your number one issue, but it just speaks to the province, how vast we are, and the issues that are number one in one area and it's not even on the radar in others. My colleague from Torngat, she can go on a totally different line of questioning, and what's important in her area, none of us can relate to it.

When you listen to a lot of this budget debate we kind of sit there sometimes and we're probably on our phones or you might be reading, but you're always listening and you hear a lot of commentary and there are a lot of interesting things to be said. It makes us realize how vast and unique we all are throughout the province. That's, I guess, what makes us so – when we come into this Legislature what makes it so unique is to sit in this Legislature and represent the interests of all these people, like I said, from Torngat Mountains right to the City of St. John's, right where we sit.

It's always a privilege when I speak – and I think I say this most occasions during the Budget Speech and this will be my last opportunity to speak on the motions before us. I will have other opportunities, of course, during the various other resolutions. I always like to say – because it's partly for my own benefit and I think it just brings a bit of levity to the situation – that we sometimes don't realize how privileged we are to be doing what we're doing. It has its moments. There are lots of days you shake your head and you get up and you wonder: My God, what have I gotten myself into? Ultimately, when you get past those moments and those minutes in time you realize that you're in a very privileged position to be where you're to. It is a privilege. You're one person

representing a district of 40 in the province. One person, you're there, you're sitting in a seat in this House and you represent that region. That's pretty special.

My colleague from Cape St. Francis and I were walking down today – and we've known each other for a long time. Actually, long before we came in this Legislature we worked together for many years, so we're not strangers. We were chatting about how you find the politics, getting in the House and that. He was enjoying it and found that the banter in the House is a bit different. I said that affects us all. The catcalls sometimes take a bit of getting used to.

I recall, on a personal note, when I got up and questioned the former premier one day and whatever way I put the question I set myself up and he gave me a quick lesson. I learned in the first few times on my feet that I better be wiser in my responses, because my responses back – there were lessons learned and I respected that.

In this House you respect a lot of those things. You may not feel respected at times, you know, when someone is over there giving you a good comeback. They could get up and spend 20 minutes; I witnessed it. Someone got up here one day and spent 20 minutes telling me, basically, the lay of the land. When you're over here all you have is the support of your colleagues around you and you haven't got much else, and back then there were seven of us. But I took it, and again, it was never personal, it was just to the point, and I respected it. It wasn't easy to sit down and listen to it, but that comes with time.

Then as time went on I guess I repaid the favour to certain people. I mean, it goes to and fro. But I always respected the House and I still respect the House. We always don't agree and we'll always have our falling out, but I've always felt – and my former colleague and still really good friend from Cape St. Francis, the former Member for Cape St. Francis, him and I used to always have those conversations.

We can have lots of disputes and we can have falling outs, but ultimately, at the end of the day, you have to respect where you're to and what you're here for. You can try to influence whoever and whatever to try to get your

problems solved. Ultimately, we're here for the betterment of the people of the province and to our own districts. Any given day, I know most of us, we're all doing the same thing, we're dealing with the smallest of issues to the most serious or sensitive issues – you name it. It comes with the territory.

Some days I wonder, my God, the stuff you're dealing with as an MHA, but then you say that's a part of it, because their problem may seem small to most but to that person that's the biggest problem in the world. That's something that I always – I learned that long before I ever got elected as an MHA. I've always been well aware of that. My colleague and I spent a lot of years working together in the mental health field so we're very familiar with – never minimize someone's problem. What is one person's problem – never minimize it. If that's the worst problem in the world that day, that is the worst problem in the world that day, and you show the respect in dealing with the problem in that nature.

It's what I do and I think every Member in this House, if I were guessing, would do the same thing for their district and their constituents because I guess that's the reason why they're all sitting in these seats. You don't get elected by just going out and putting your sign on the side of the street. You have to prove yourself, you have to visit the doors and you have to tell each individual – and, Mr. Speaker, you do the same thing during election time. We all do the same thing. That's a part of it. That's why we're here.

I guess the thing being is that sometimes I think we all get caught up in the to and fro and the debates. I think we should always never lose sight of why we're here, ultimately why we're here. I think we're all here for the same reason. Our path to get there is different than government's opposite and vice versa. I get that and I respect that. That's why we're the Opposition. I guess that's why there's a government on one side and we're the Opposition on the other side.

To that point, the Opposition, we're here to oppose. Sometimes I find that somewhat misleading when we say you're there to oppose. I really think that it's probably not the correct term. We're the Loyal Opposition, I get that. I

think we're here more to hold government to account. But not even that, you get Question Period after Question Period after Question Period, and we get 22 or 23 questions, I guess, when you size it up, we get close to 30 questions a day. We're trying to make things better. It's not that we oppose. We'll oppose certain things outright if we don't agree with a policy and we'll go hard at it, and whatever happens, happens. A lot of the times government has a majority so the government tends to get their own way. Sometimes our role is to bring light to it, bring attention to it and go hard at it, and maybe the public, the interest groups and stakeholders will start joining forces or speaking up. We may highlight things they never seen. It works in many ways. At the end of the day we're only trying to make things better.

Sometimes when you say Opposition, I think, sometimes it misleads and it probably discredits what we really do over here. We're all no different than anyone else in this House. We all have a role to do in our districts. We come in here, we're all really working for the people of the province. There is an administration in charge and we're trying to hold that administration to account.

You're bestowed the responsibility of managing a \$9.3-billion budget. That's a lot of money. I've always said the public purse needs to have – we need to have oversight on the public purse because that's what we're elected for. That comes with the territory. When you're elected you are elected to be – if you're not in control of the public purse, you have to make sure that those who are in control of the public purse do make the right decisions.

Not always the right decision, but make decisions that you think are in the best interest of the people. It's not for what I get out of it, and I think most Members here, it's not about that. You have to come in here and realize that it's not about you; it's about who you represent. Again, I'll say I think most every Member in this House adheres to that.

I'll say this in all fairness, if people don't adhere to it, maybe they're in the wrong business and that's something for them to decide. But I think we've got a lot of good people in this House and I think they pick up for their constituents. I

know a lot of people in other areas of the province that have Members opposite as their Member, they speak highly of them and I commend them. Again, you're not getting elected and re-elected in this House without doing your job.

I think sometimes the oversight always missed in the big picture here is: why we're really here, why we oppose, why we set up and have a Question Period and we question government. Why sometimes we get in our debates and we do what we're doing and sometimes people might take offence to certain antics. That's part of it. Sometimes you might get offended by a comment from across the way. Again, it is all part of it, as long as it's kept at a reasonable level, it's not personal and there's not harm intended, I see nothing wrong with that.

Nothing wrong with passion, nothing wrong with compassion. Direct it in the right way, get the results. And you will not always get the results you want; that's something else to keep in mind. I've said this before, too, and Members opposite have probably heard me say it, you have to be able to go to bed and sleep at night. If you do what you feel is right, if you're principled and you do what you thing is right and you do it to the best of your ability, even if it fails, you can go to bed at night and know that there was nothing else that you could do. You've emptied the tank, you've done what you felt was right, even if the outcome is nowhere what you had planned. As long as you could say that to yourself when you go to bed, I think you're doing a good job. I think that we're all in that boat.

We're not winning every war. We're not satisfying every person in our district. Like I always say: There is no district in this province that has all one party or another party. No one wins in a shutout; there are no shutouts in this business. When you run, if you get 2,000 votes and your competitor gets 1,000 – always remember there are a 1,000 people out there that were not supportive of you or your party: they were with your opponent but you are responsible for them.

We hear from time to time stories: Well, you never voted for me so I'm not helping you. That's happened; we've all heard those stories.

It's happened; we've heard that. I suppose being from a competitive spirit, there is a part of me that can understand, on the broad sense, where they're coming from. But on the big thing, you take that Oath of Office, you come in there and you sit in your seat and that goes out the door. We all do it. I've got relationships with lots of people that have never voted for me and I helped them out on a constant basis. It is what we are put here for. If you stop doing that you shouldn't be in this seat.

When we get into these budget debates and we're talking main motions, amendments and subamendments, it's opportunities for all of us to get up and speak and express our concerns. You're not always getting that opportunity in Question Period because, again, we're limited to so many questions. But get it out there, get what you have to say out, express your concerns. How big or small they are to some others, they're not small to you or the people you represent.

That's something that I hear from time to time in this House. No question is a bad question. No question should be minimized or dismissed because it doesn't seem as important as the big-ticket item, the big million-dollar questions and all that. That should never be the premise. That should always be respected. If anyone has a concern, they're speaking for the members of their district and issues in their district, they should be given that respect.

Mr. Speaker, during the budget debate, again, we go through Estimates. Estimates is an opportunity where the shadow ministers – that's something else we get into in the Opposition. I think calling Members – and the federal government too a lot – the shadow minister is more respectful. If you're a critic, it sounds like you're criticizing everything the ministers opposite does. That's not really accurate. You challenge them on lots of things, but I don't know if critic is the word because I agree with some things. We don't always disagree. You work with the ministers opposite. We don't disagree on everything.

During Estimates, we'll go in and we'll analyze, go over the budget line items and ask questions. For the most part, my Estimates, the ministers have been pretty open to answering questions. Ironically, a lot of those questions are probably

questions you could have asked in Question Period but Question Period is never long enough. We get 25 minutes a day, four days a week. You're never getting that opportunity. We've been able to have that opportunity during Estimates. It's not meant for any fanfare. It's not a pay-per-view event. We come into this House and we sit there for three to four hours and we'll ask them questions.

Again, it's not about you getting on NTV or the newspaper or you're in the front line of the news article every day. You're getting questions out there that are important to the people that you represent.

I was here in Estimates last night and I was asking questions for the District of Port au Port and the District of Torngat.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** I think there were Members opposite, I think, of St. Barbe questions, but it doesn't matter because they're all important questions. They're not all CBS-related, trust me, but they're important questions.

I have a district that's very close to St. John's and it's very striving. It's a great district. A place I'm proud of; I've lived there all my life. We've come a long way. We got things to improve on and get there but we're getting there. I know that I'm fortunate to a large degree when I listen to other Members and some of the questions, some of the issues that come up in their districts. I'd be the first to say I'm very fortunate.

My district is very vibrant. It's growing; it's a large municipality. The municipality itself is very stand-alone. It's the second largest municipality in the province outside the City of St. John's. I get that I'm very fortunate. That doesn't mean we don't have needs. That doesn't mean that I'm not dealing with issues on a daily basis. My issues are bigger issues, and unfortunately with the bigger issues sometimes come the bigger cost issues and there's a bigger price tag attached. But they're all issues.

Other Members here, they have 10, 12 – I wouldn't hazard to guess – small communities throughout their district. I know my colleague from Exploits said today about when we get back to normal and the firemen's ball, and I said I always enjoyed going to the firemen's ball. He made reference that he has 13 to go. I have one. It is a big event, but it is one. I never lose sight that I am very fortunate there.

The issues are different. What's big in that area and what's big in my community in Conception Bay South, they're not as big a deal. They're always equally as important. There are just different challenges to get you there.

Mr. Speaker, as my time comes down – and, again, I'll speak when we get into some resolutions – I just think it is very important. We're in a time now where we have a lot of serious issues facing us. When I spoke there last week, I turned some of my commentary into a bit of a comedic – I suppose I turned it a bit into a comedic form because we're frustrated sometimes, too.

We're here day to day, and when we're not in the House we're out in our districts and we hear it. People have concerns. People are really concerned about what our future holds: Where is my children's future? Is there going to be a future for them in this province. I don't want them to move away. If they move away, where does that leave me? It is just as well for us to move away. Is there any future in the province? I think we all hear that. I hear that pretty regularly and it is scary.

To go back to my commentary last week about the budget, my issue is that that was your opportunity. There was a missed opportunity there, I think, that the people of the province were prepared. Everyone acknowledged that we were in serious trouble. It plays with your psyche, because in your psyche you're always afraid of what's in store. We're all like it, me included. I have children; I have young daughters. When you prepare yourself mentally – and everyone seemed to be in that mental capacity; they were ready to face what was coming – we get this budget and it was like: What was that?

There are certain measures in there that we don't know for sure what is going to happen there yet that have to be fleshed out and analyzed. There was nothing there what people expected. Leading into it, everyone was set up for expecting the possible worst. Dame Greene's report came out. That hit the province; that rocked the province. Little hints coming that we're going to reform government. Okay, so we're getting something. Something is coming. But the budget, really there was not a whole lot to it. There is stuff in the budget; there are measures possibly being taken. Nothing like what the public expected. Members opposite may not agree that the budget was nothing. Not that it was nothing, but it was nothing like what the public expected.

You're going to go into the next year and we're going to bring down a budget. More than likely, we will all be in the same Chamber, or most of us will. It could be a harsh budget. You're going to do what you could've done over two years and more measured, more tolerable, more palatable to people of the province. It's going to be done in one swoop. Because in this election cycle, unless – now, the Premier says it's not about getting re-elected, and fair enough if that's the case. You'll probably try to pull the reins back a bit in year three. You can't do too much too fast. It shocks the economy. It shocks the people. It's not where we need to be.

Last week, when I was making my commentary and I was making my digs, it was more meant to just put it into terms that everyone can understand. Sometimes we don't get it in those terms. Put it to people; people can grasp it. I was trying to get to the point that that's what people feel. The people just throw their hands up. They say: Here we go again. We did it again.

As we proceed – and as my time expires – I think it's really important that we will work with government. We've committed to doing that. We want to change the conversation. We're not here to be a thorn in the side. We're here to make sure that the right decisions are made, not only for our own districts, but for the people of the province. Because we're at a time right now where I really believe we all need to do that, pull on the same oar and get us to the other side of this. It has to be done through collaboration and real collaboration.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**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 Industry, Energy and Technology, that this House do now adjourn.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

This House does now stand adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow, Wednesday.

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