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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 10 a.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Government House
Leader ready?

House Leader ready?

Admit strangers.

Order, please!

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House
Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2, Bill 14.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House
Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded
by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial
Affairs, that this House resolve itself into a
Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to
consider a resolution and Bill 14.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The motion is that I do now leave
the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a
Committee of the Whole.

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.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a
Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the
Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are now debating the related resolution and
Bill 14.

Resolution

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

*“That it is expedient to bring in a measure
respecting the imposition of taxes on personal
income.”*

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

S. COADY: Good morning everyone.

I think this is an important discussion and
debate. It falls out of the budget documentation
and the budget information that was presented a
few weeks ago now. The budget did pass last
night; we finished the Estimates process, which I
much appreciate. One of the things coming out
of the budget and built into the Estimates, of
course, is change to the personal income tax
rate. It's a rate increase but only for those that
fall into the category of earning \$135,973 and
above. An individual who earns \$135,973 or
above will have their personal income taxes
changed.

As I said, *Budget 2021* announced increases to
personal income taxes for higher income earners
and new brackets for those with taxable income
greater than \$250,000 in personal income. The
tax rate on the current fourth bracket is
increasing – this is the fourth bracket – meaning
above \$135,973 will change from 17.3 per cent
to 17.8 per cent. That's obviously 0.5, half a
percentage point.

The fifth bracket rate is increasing from 18.3 per
cent to 19.8 per cent. Three new income tax
brackets are being introduced, so the \$250,000 at
the \$500,000 and \$1-million level. If you
personally earn \$500,000 a year or a million
dollars a year, your income tax rates are going
up. At \$250,000, you'll have an income tax rate
of 20.8 per cent; at \$500,000, 21.3 per cent; and
at over a million, 21.8 per cent.

Now the combined total of the new revenue for the province is \$15.3 million. The income tax changes for those that earn above \$135,973 individually per year, when you take all the tax changes for anyone in those categories or above, it will bring in about \$15.3 million per year.

Again, no change in personal income tax rates on anybody who earns less than \$135,973. The tax brackets are indexed to the provincial consumer price index. For 2022, the threshold will be adjusted for the change in annual CPI for September. All the different brackets are indexed. They go up with the consumer price index, but that won't be known until October 2021. That's based on the consumer price index.

I will say, Mr. Chair, this is now bringing us in line with the rest of Atlantic Canada. For those that will have the budget documents, the Budget Speech before them, there was what I thought was a good chart that indicated what the personal income taxes were for the rest of Atlantic Canada for the thresholds that we're talking about. You will see in that chart that Newfoundland and Labrador is on par or, actually, in some categories, still below the rest of Atlantic Canada.

It was important to us, I think, as government and to people of the province, to remain very competitive with Atlantic Canada in particular, but even in the country, we want to make sure that we remain competitive in our taxes. We want to make sure that we continue to focus on what I'm going to call fairness in our tax system. We want to continue to focus on ensuring that we remain a very competitive place to live, work and raise a family so that people make the right decisions to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We think that this will have some impact on the higher income earners, but if you look, Mr. Chair, their tax rate was lower than the rest of Atlantic Canada previously. We've now made some adjustments to ensure that it is now a little bit more competitive in Atlantic Canada.

We have not changed and, again, I'll repeat that. Anyone earning less than \$135,973, personal income taxes are not changing. I've indicated the tax brackets will move with the consumer price index. I've also indicated that we're still

very, very competitive in Atlantic Canada. Even at 21.8 we're more in line with Atlantic Canada, especially when you look at the brackets.

I do know, again, I'll reiterate it, that if we changed all of the entire brackets and the percentages and made them comparative to Nova Scotia, for example, we changed all of the brackets and we changed the bracket percentages, we would take in about \$180 million more into this province from personal income tax. We are not doing that, Mr. Chair. We believe that we're very competitive in Atlantic Canada. We believe that we have from – what I'm going to call – a wholesome view a good tax system as it relates to competitiveness and as it relates to fairness. Therefore, we will be remaining as we are with our overall tax brackets. But I will remind Members in this House that if we did change completely, carte blanche, to take in the tax brackets and the percentages that are in Nova Scotia, we would bring in approximately \$180 million more. So I will say that just so you understand how competitive our tax system is, Mr. Chair.

I'll conclude my remarks now because I want to listen to debate. I'll take whatever questions there may be. Again, this is about being competitive, it's about being fair and it's about ensuring that we have the monies in this province to address, not just the services that are required around the province and have the money to have the services that are required in health care and education but also to remain competitive and to ensure that families have a good quality of life here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

On that note, I'll adjourn my discussion and listen to debate.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll start off by, I guess, an overall indication. Again, this particular budget seems to focus heavily on revenue generation as opposed to expenditure reduction. Increasing taxes, whether it's personal income tax, gas tax or any other tax, does not help grow the economy. It takes more money out of people's pockets. We find ourselves, again, faced as a province in somewhat of a precarious situation. We are projecting, according to the economic documents, a 0.3 per cent decline in population, which ultimately means that we're going to have less people paying more tax. The fundamental principle should be more people paying less tax. How do we get there?

There are lots of different initiatives that could be undertaken to achieve that. For example, maybe what we should have is a hiring tax credit where businesses are given a credit for hiring additional employees. Once they hire additional employees, we all know they will pay taxes on their income.

I think that there was an opportunity to look a relocation tax credit. We've talked about Newfoundland and the success we've had in the IT industries here and the fact that COVID has proven to us that there is an opportunity for people, not only to work from home but to literally work from any location anywhere in the world. If we're going to promote our province as a place to work, to come to, to come back to, or to move here and set up your business or work from here, then I think we have to be competitive in our tax bracket. Not only competitive, I think we have to be better than.

While I understand the rationale and, yes, we're competitive with Atlantic Canada, I would argue that we need to be better than. In order to do that we need to look at ways of encouraging people to come to Newfoundland and Labrador, maybe looking at a relocation tax credit. Again, if you accept a new job here in certain targeted growth sectors then there's a tax credit available to you.

I think those are some of the things that we need to start looking at. It simply can't be about increases all the time. Because increases simply turn around, add revenue, yes, but do we really, at the end of the day, improve our fiscal situation because of it? If more people wind up leaving, then the end result is less tax.

We've talked about the Terra Nova extensively for the last couple of days and I think there are currently 461 people that are still employed with that project. Depending on the outcome of that, there could be a significant loss of income to this province and a significant loss of tax income to this province. Again, there are lots of things like that that could happen. We haven't heard any news, as I have said, and sometimes no news is good news. I look forward to, hopefully, the companies will be able to come to a resolution and that project will continue to be a part of our business here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know there are monies factored into the budget for that project, from both royalties and other tax revenues. Again, I look at it and I look at the – this is a bracket, the higher income tax brackets and that's fine; but, at the end of the day, it still comes down to the point of: How do we encourage more people to come here? As I just said, we need to be not only competitive; we need to be better than.

We seem to have a shortage of nurses these days. We seem to have a shortage of physicians in certain parts of our province and specialists, higher-income people that if we're going to recruit them to come to Newfoundland and Labrador or work in the territories, as the Minister of Health likes to refer to us outside of the Avalon Peninsula, then we need to make sure our tax brackets are not only competitive but better than.

So I think it's important for us to not just simply rest. We have to go out and be creative and find different ways of focusing on what we charge people. Again, it is not just the personal income tax piece, it's all of the other taxes. I think and I hope that the government this year is undertaking that cost-benefit analysis of all the taxes and fees that they collect and, at the end of the day, maybe there will be some that will be eliminated simply because they're ineffective, because it costs us more to collect them than we do in actual payments received.

Those are the things that we should be doing. Those are the type of programs we should be looking at. The whole principle is: How do we get more people paying less tax? I look at the first bracket (a), it says in the bill: "if the taxable income does not exceed \$38,081, 8.7% of the

taxable income” – so in other words they pay 8.7 per cent. Perhaps we should be looking at lowering that, perhaps we should be looking at eliminating it for everyone. So the first \$30,000 and whatever it is, you pay no tax on. Maybe then people at the lower income levels would have an opportunity to have more money in their pockets. That money then translates into the economy and they spend it. They will spend it on goods and services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I think those are the cost-benefit analyses that we need to be doing. We really need to be seriously looking at how we can make ourselves, not just competitive but better than. How we go about that will require sitting down and not simply taking what you always did and add a per cent to it or add another cent on or another increase, those are easy things to do.

The tougher things to do are to get into it and look deeper and find out what creative solutions we can arrive at. Because changing that population trend and getting more people here will make us a better province. At the end of the day, we will certainly be in the position to afford to do a lot more things and people will have more money in their pockets. At the end of that, they will spend more money and we can grow our economy. Because that’s the way out of this. We can’t tax our way out of this. We have to grow our economy and we have to be as efficient as we can.

Again, I think that there’s lots of opportunity left. I’m a little concerned with some of the recommendations in the Premier’s Greene report and what the future holds for them in the next couple of years, because there are some serious things in there that certainly recommended collecting that \$180 million in taxes – in personal income tax. I’m glad to see government did not go with that. I hope they will not go with that. I hope they will look at different ways of stimulating the economy, as opposed to simply increasing taxes.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will end my remarks.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It’s a pleasure to speak again, as we always say. It might be a cliché, but it is a pleasure and we always appreciate it.

Mr. Chair, this bill we’re debated here now, the personal income tax increase for the over \$135,000, I don’t think anyone’s going to really complain too much. You’re supposedly hitting the higher tax bracket. The vast majority of middle-class people and lower-income people, it doesn’t affect them. We always say if it doesn’t affect you, you don’t really care.

But my colleague, the Finance critic, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, he makes a good point. He talks about attracting – we want to attract people here.

I know in my district, family doctor shortage is probably the greatest issue I’m dealing with, outside the norm. We always have roads and infrastructure issues and what have you. The family doctor shortage is by far the number one issue. It’s an issue that I’ve taken on and I’ve committed to my constituents to lobby for. I’ve petitioned and I’m active on the social media accounts. I’m active on speaking of the issue. I’m not pointing fingers, it’s no one’s real fault. It’s like everything. It’s a problem, maybe a societal problem.

The Minister of Health always points out we have enough family doctors. I get that. I’ve spoken to him many times about it. He’s always been open to having that conversation. We’ve been told 640 is the number that could facilitate enough family doctors that we can operate, that we don’t have 100,000 people without a doctor. That’s based on a model that they’re there five or six days a week and they’re probably doing a couple of evenings. They are doing house calls and that, which was the norm in previous years.

In CBS, if I had to wait the second day to get an appointment with my doctor, I found that really odd. Why couldn’t I get an appointment the

same day? I was calling that morning and had an appointment that afternoon.

I think right throughout the province I think we could attest that was pretty well the common thing. There was no difficulty usually getting in to see your family doctor on a weekday, you'd get in one day that week. I know in CBS now, three to four weeks to get a phone call, maybe four to five weeks to get an in-person visit.

Lifestyles have changed. They've changed. They have families. The demands are different, it's just different and I respect them. More power to them. Quality of life is everything. I mean, we go through this life sometimes, it's not all about work. I fully support all the family doctors out there and whatever lifestyle they choose, more power to them and kudos. But we need to find a way of getting past that issue because I'm not saying they need to work more hours. The minister's analogy is, basically, we should be forcing them and give incentives to force them to work more hours, to be in the clinics more. But that's probably not fair. That falls into family life and personal life.

We talk about mental health. There are all kinds of variations that we can't decide why. Maybe it's a mental health issue. Maybe some doctors just mentally can only handle working half a week, and I support that. But until we deal with the root cause of the problem, we'll always have this problem. We'll talk in words and we're going to bring in some nurse practitioners, we're going to do that. That's another complicated matter. Some models are not working. That's a different dynamic between family doctors and nurse practitioners.

If we're going to increase personal income taxes on the higher income brackets, it's going to get you some revenue no doubt and it's going to play well to people who say you need to tax the rich. No doubt about it. You play into a group, publicly you'll get credit for it. But, at the end of the day, if you're doing that, are you not deterring the family doctor from coming here, that we're short on, and many other professionals? We can list down the line who are going to be affected by this.

I've never been a believer – and I guess it's a Conservative policy and we went through this in

2016 on taxation – you never tax away the prosperity. Taxation is not the answer. It can give you short-term benefits; there's no doubt about it. Again, I'll come back to analysis, I said in this House, I don't know, last week or the week before when I spoke on the budget, what we kept coming back to was they don't know. That was turned into a bit of comedy and whatever. My point was – and our leader said it yesterday – we really don't know what the full details are, what the full analysis is. This is probably another case.

You're going to get monies and we're going to raise money by raising the income tax, obviously revenues, but what analysis has been done? What's the deterrent? You look at tuition and you're looking at raising things. We froze tuition to increase enrolment and attract people to university. We've done so for many years. Right now, it's coming to a cost of upwards of \$70 million a year, I think. The minister can correct me. But enrolment increased; national and provincially, the enrolment increased because we reduced tuition. Obviously, money talks.

We love Newfoundland. We all love it. Native Newfoundlanders, we love it. People who move here love it. If you're up in, I don't know, Ontario and you have a nice climate and you have a pretty decent lifestyle and what have you and you're a family doctor or you're any other professional – I use family doctor because that's my number-one issue, but there are all kinds of other professionals – what's attracting you to come here? Not the weather. We like the scenery; we like the fishing; we like the hunting; we like the country. I love all that stuff. I love the fresh air. That's not attracting them here. Usually, the bottom line comes down to money, and somewhat lifestyle.

Those things need to be put into some of the analysis when you do a lot of these budgetary items. I've thought about this many times. I've sat in this Assembly for a few years now listening to a lot of debates over stuff like this – income tax change, a fee hike or what have you. It's no slight against any staff or anyone, really; it's probably more of just thinking outside the box.

I'll use probably one the Premier has used sometimes: You're moving a lever. If you're doing that and you're increasing your taxes and you're increasing your revenues, what's the downside? I guess, in life you look out – and I always say the best decision-makers sometimes are the ones who can see the fifth or sixth step down the road. There's a domino effect: you're taking that decision there but it's going to have an impact down the road somewhere. It will always have an impact no matter what decision you make, and especially governments, because it's not affecting all of us, it's affecting certain groups, and a tax increase affects that group. But there are lots of other things that are impacted by those decisions.

In one avenue we're trying to increase our population growth, that's a big issue, trying to attract people here; you have to create an environment that people want to come here. We'll never be able to change the weather. As much as we would like to get up and shift our global – this is who we are. We love who we are. I love who we are. But we have to create other environments. If we're going to increase personal income tax, we're going to increase the cost and fees – back in 2016 – we're still living in a pretty expensive – the cost of living in this province has gone very, very high.

I go to supermarkets sometimes, Mr. Chair, and I wonder how people can survive, how people can actually survive. A family, a young, working, average-income family, how they can survive in this province. They're the people who are here. If you talk to them, they don't want to go anywhere else. Newfoundland, this is where they want to be because it's where they're from. That's in your blood. We're native Newfoundlanders and that's what we'll always be.

Any cost of living increase, and this is a cost of living increase, and it doesn't affect those families, they could care less about that. But what they don't realize is it's affecting getting a family doctor. I can bring out 10 different examples. We're looking for psychiatrists, a big shortage on psychiatrists. Mental health: I have a constituent with a three-year wait – a three-year wait. That's real; that's not made up. I was just reading the email here, actually, just before the House started, and I'm not even fished reading

the email. A three-year wait. Most of them are making over \$135,000, so that's a good example. We have extra bonuses of psychiatrists outside of the province, what's going to bring them here?

That's the sort of analysis that needs to be done on a lot of these decisions. I'm zeroing in on my issue and my concern, but you can take that and you can plant that everywhere you want to. These are the analyses not done. A lot of this budget, we never supported it because we didn't know those details. What is the impact? What will come? What's the endgame? If you don't know the endgame, you can't support it without knowing the result. I think this is another case of an analysis that you have to look at down the road and see what the possible fallouts will be before you can support something like this.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak to this bill.

Mr. Chair, I see two sides of the argument, and I do appreciate what the Member for Conception Bay South is saying. I totally understand his concern. I really, really do. But I'm kind of looking at it from the perspective of, again, trying to be realistic about where we're to in terms of our year-over-year deficits and our debt and so on, which is growing year over year over year.

Something has to be done. There has to be something done to reduce – I believe the biggest part is we have to try to reduce costs wherever we can. But there also has to be, perhaps, on the other side, a little bit of raising of revenue as well to try to somehow create some kind of a balance to get ourselves on track. To eventually get ourselves to a balanced budget and hopefully then we'll have our balanced budget legislation and we can stay on that road, God willing.

Nobody wants to see taxes go up. I don't want to see it go up. Raise your hand who likes paying taxes. There won't be any – okay, apparently my colleague here from Bellevue, he likes paying taxes.

AN HON. MEMBER: Can't do nothing without it.

P. LANE: I agree we can't do nothing without it but that doesn't mean you like paying them. I don't like paying them. None of us likes paying them is my point. But it's a necessary evil. It's something that has to be done in order to provide essential public services for people, including ourselves, at some points, depending on what services you avail of.

It's about trying to create some sort of a balance in terms of raising revenues and reducing expenditures. That's what we need to do. I see this as sort of part of it. Again, I don't like the idea of raising anyone's taxes, but I will say this, and this is what I like about this one the most, I suppose, is that at least we are targeting the individuals who are most able to pay.

I remember the budget of 2016, I don't know if we all remember it, not many of us were here, some of us were here, a lot of us were here I suppose; I remember that budget. I remember up with the gas tax, up with the HST and the levy. That was the sore point for most people; that levy, that was brutal. That was beyond brutal and everything else. That combination of taxing everyone to death. And when we're taxing everyone to death, that was the average working person. That wasn't the elite; that wasn't someone who was making a six-figure salary – I mean, they were paying it as well, of course. But it was just average families who are trying their best to survive; they got hit with all these taxes. It was just totally unbearable and thank God most of it got reversed, eventually.

I would not want to see us going back down that road again. So if there is going to be any kind of a tax increase, I would prefer that those who are most able would be the ones that are going to pay a little extra in taxes, if that's what's required on the revenue side as opposed to the average, everyday family who are trying to survive and keep their head above water. I would support it in that regard.

I do agree with the Member for CBS, there are concerns, you have to look at all sides of it. There is no doubt that when we look at – and when we look at it and we can cherry-pick a profession, as he did being a physician, and he's right; he is not wrong in what he's saying. But I am not sure that we can't address – if we have recruiting issues with family doctors, just as an example – I'll just pick that as an example because it was the one he used – I think that could be addressed through the recruiting process. Because even though we have raised the taxes, there is nothing to say the government can't say: Well, in recognition of the fact that we raised the tax bracket, we're going to offer family doctors an extra \$10,000 or \$20,000 more than we did before. That way they're not out any money, they're still receiving the same compensations as they would have, but then others who are in a position to pay more can. In the recruiting process, we can still have the ability to deal with doctors by raising the amount that we would offer them: if that's what we want to do.

Now, I'm not necessarily certain that we even need to be raising the amount of money that we're giving to doctors, per se, because the Member is right: this is a reality as well and he sort of captured it beautifully, I thought. If you are from Newfoundland and Labrador, if you are born and raised here and your family is here and your parents are here, your grandparents, your siblings, and so on are here: you're going to want to stay here. Now, not everybody. Some people choose to leave, some are forced to leave but there is a much greater chance that if you are born and bred here that you will be more apt to stay here and so on, and the money may not necessarily be the big motivator.

Now, obviously, if you're getting someone who is not from here and all they're in it for is just the money and the best offer, I don't know if we can ever compete with that. I don't think we can compete with the bigger provinces or compete with the United States, who are paying ridiculous amounts of money to some of these doctors. I don't know if we can compete with it.

I do know and I can give this as an example: I had a constituent of mine who contacted me about a year or two ago. His son applied for medical school at MUN. I can't remember the

exact, but something in the back of my mind tells me it was like a 96.8 average, something like that. It was somewhere in the neighbourhood of around a 96 per cent or a 96.8 per cent average. He couldn't get into MUN medical school, couldn't be accepted because there were only so many seats and a number of those seats were going to international students.

This is nothing against anybody coming here for an education; I don't want to turn it into that. The point is those international students who are coming here, what is the likelihood of them staying here versus someone who was born and raised and all their family are in Newfoundland staying here? He couldn't get in with a 96 per cent average because there were others; they had a quota of so many locals and so many international students. The father said to me: I can't believe it. It's Memorial University. My son has these high marks. He wants to stay here. He wants to be a family physician, open a practice, live in Newfoundland, his life with his family and he can't get into medical school.

There's a problem with that. That's not a money issue, but there is a big problem with that. That's something I would say to the Minister of Education, who is responsible for post-secondary. I can see he is listening intently and nodding his head in agreement. That is an issue. If we're talking about recruiting doctors and retaining doctors, if we have people who are born and raised here and their families are here, and they want to stay here and live here, then we have to find room for them at that medical school.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: Assuming they're qualified and able to do it and so on. To have a student with a 96.8 per cent average in all the science courses – biology, chemistry and all this kind of stuff – and wanting to be a family doctor and couldn't get in to MUN medical school, and now he's gone to the Mainland. He had to go away to get into medical school and I don't even think he's coming back here. That's sad. That would address that issue that taxes wouldn't. I'm sure he would be willing to stay here even with this tax regime.

The other thing, which hasn't been discussed I don't believe, and I'm hoping the Minister of Finance, when she speaks – I think she will have to speak again. I'd like for her to address it, if she hasn't already. I was a couple of minutes late coming in, so maybe she did. I'm wondering where these taxes fall in line with other provinces and other Atlantic provinces, because my understanding is that we're still competitive. It's not like this tax bracket is going to make us totally out of whack and all of a sudden nobody is coming to Newfoundland because the taxes are so high. My understanding is with this increase we are still competitive with the other provinces and Atlantic provinces. I think we have to – as long as that's the case I think it's reasonable.

We can't simply be of the mindset that says nobody wants to come to Newfoundland and everybody has to get a break. We have to have the lowest of everything, the lowest taxes and the best offers of anywhere else because nobody wants to come to Newfoundland. I really don't believe that. We have a lot to offer. We have a great lifestyle to offer here. We have safety here that you don't have in a lot of places around the country.

So there are a lot of reasons why doctors want to come here. I don't think this is going to prevent it from happening and I will support this bill.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a great opportunity to talk about this bill today. As I talk about it, I'll take a little bit of a different approach. If I could tell the people of this House – I'm sure I could put a lot of smiles on people's faces here – that we could bring in 25,000 people that make over \$100,000 each and we don't have to create one job here; they're just going to bring their money to the province and spend it and live here, my God, can you imagine how beneficial? That would be great for the province. Like I say, I'm sure it would put a smile on everybody's face here.

What I'm talking about are rotational workers who are estimated anywhere between 20,000 and 30,000 people. We'll cut that in half and say 25,000 rotational workers. Now, these rotational workers don't go away for \$12.50 an hour. These rotational workers, I guarantee you 90 per cent of them are making over \$100,000-plus, and they are up there, which would equate to about \$2.5 billion being brought back to our province, and we don't have to supply one job to these people. That's a huge revenue. That's a lot of money. I don't know what it equates to in taxes, but it comes with a big price tag if we lose these people. So we have to ensure that we do everything we can to keep them here.

Now, it's not just the rotational workers. The rotational workers, they're a lot of young families. They have spouses – husbands and wives. They have kids that avail of certain things here in Newfoundland and Labrador. So if they go away and we end up losing them, we end up losing their spouses and their kids too. That's a big blow. Now you're not talking about 25,000 people, you're talking a lot more. You look at the spinoffs of that. You look at what it would incur if we start losing our rotational workers who have had a very, very tough year and a half – almost two years now – with COVID. I mean their lives are pretty tough as it is anyway, but they've sacrificed a lot.

The airline industry, we talk about we want to have more people flying in and out of Newfoundland and Labrador. We talk about the tourism industry. We talk about people coming to visit. We talk about families coming home from away, who after years come home for their Come Home Year or just to visit family. But what people don't realize is the rotational workers have to get back and forth across this country, across this globe. They put a lot of money; they put a lot of butts into those seats of the airlines and the planes. If you take those away as well, again, the airline industry is going to hurt. We know about supply and demand. If the demand isn't there for seats, well, guess what, the airlines are going to start pulling out again, they're going to start cutting routes again. That's not something that we want.

If we start losing rotational workers – and we're approaching this from a tax bracket as well. I know the tax bracket is a Catch-22 sort of thing.

We want to ensure that there are legitimate taxes for people that can afford it to pay for goods and services throughout the province and for those who may be the most vulnerable that can't. That's the way our society works and so it should. But there's a tipping point there as well where we want to ensure that people realize they can pay their fair share of taxes, but they don't want to be overtaxed because there are options to go to other places. We want to let them know that Newfoundland and Labrador is the place to be. We want to make it as attractive as we possibly can to keep them here or to get more people here, new people here.

The goods and services bought: I was a rotational worker; I bought a house here. One hundred and twenty-seven more payments and it's mine. It's great. Vehicles: Myself and my wife own two vehicles. Most rotational workers, they and their spouse have to own two vehicles as well. When you add that up it's great revenue for the province.

Toys: I know as a rotational worker you put in your 20 or 30 days and you come home. You want to enjoy yourself with your family. The RVs, the camping sites, the quads, the snowmobiles: The rotational workers have the money to buy these things and they enjoy buying them because that's what they want to do. They want to enjoy their time at home after being away for so long. One of the sayings on the rig – it's been everywhere of course – is work hard play hard and that's one thing we did. I worked hard in Alberta, Saskatchewan and BC, but I made sure I played hard in Newfoundland and Labrador too. That's the way I wanted to live my life and that's the way I lived it.

Food: We heard some hon. Members talking about food a little while ago. It's absolutely insane. Obviously, there's no finger pointing; it's the way that we've gone. Just in the past year alone, the food prices are absolutely crazy. We all make a great wage here, but I find myself, going to the grocery store sometimes, I get absolutely defeated when I walk out after spending \$100 and I have one grocery bag. I'm not an extravagant eater, by no means. I eat a lot, but I don't eat very extravagantly. I can only imagine what somebody who doesn't make our income – somebody who's working very hard,

by the way, making their \$35,000 a year – how hard they find it to buy food.

Tourism: When the winter, summer comes, a lot of rotational workers – I know when I came home, every single hitch I got off, myself and my wife, we would pick a different place each month here in Newfoundland and Labrador, whether it be the Riverfront Chalets in Grand Falls-Windsor or some place in Deer Lake or Corner Brook, some place on the Island to go and spend a night or two because we wanted to get away.

Tax revenue: The money that's brought into the province by rotational workers, it's a substantial amount and it can't be overlooked, which ties me back to the whole bill itself. A lot of these workers, they are making over \$135,000, \$140,000. I'm sure a lot of them are just happy enough to help society and help those, again, that are vulnerable and the social programs we have in Newfoundland and Labrador. I know I was. I was happy to pay my fair share of taxes.

As things start to erode a little bit or degrade – doctor shortages, roads, and we talk about it every single day – sometimes people are going to think that the incentive to be here is going to get smaller and smaller. We need to make them bigger and bigger. Again, without jobs and employment, the immigration and the population growth, it's going nowhere. We want to ensure that we have an environment where they can grow and they want to be.

The doctor retention, we just come back to that. Like I just said, that's one of the incentives that are going to keep people here, within that tax bracket. At the end of the day, it's what we want to do: We want to keep the people here inside that tax bracket, to make sure that they don't want to go anywhere else.

Tuition fees for doctors that leave: I don't know how to do it and I guess that's the big question. Somebody who wants to stay here, they should get every incentive in the world. We have a great deal of homegrown Newfoundland and Labrador doctors as well that I'm very proud to call friends; as well as doctors come from different countries that want to stay. Dr. Cheriyan out in Grand Falls-Windsor, he's been there now for 22, 23 years. God bless him, he

loves it here and we're only too happy to have him. There's that as well.

Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, for instance, we have a lot of incentives there to keep people. We're about to open a long-term health care centre. There's an announcement coming with the Lionel Kelland Hospice this coming Friday. I'll be there for that and I look forward to it. Marathon Gold is another one. We have great mining projects now out in Central where people are going to be making over \$100,000 a year, probably up in that \$135,000 tax bracket.

The whole goal to keep people here and the incentive to keep people here should offset whatever tax increase we have. It doesn't go hand in hand. We can't say in one hand that we're going to raise the taxes, but the incentives are going to get lower and lower. I'm not saying that's what's happening but we have to ensure that we are very careful of that. Because if I'm going to pick somewhere in this world to live and I'm going to pay a little bit extra to live there, well by God they better have some good incentives for myself and my family to be there. I'm sure that in Newfoundland and Labrador we do have lots to offer.

The Member for CBS talked about the weather. Well, the weather sometimes a lot of people don't like it, but one great thing about Newfoundland and Labrador, and for anybody that's watching that might want to live here one day, we actually have seasons. We do. We have a transition of seasons and it's fantastic. It should be an incentive. I enjoy the seasons. I enjoy the summer. I enjoy the winter, the fall and the spring. It's something that we have. Sometimes the winter spills over into the summer, but we have seasons –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: Exactly, we do. We have it out our way and a lot less fog.

We're happy about that. Again, I just want to reiterate – it's not just \$135,000 when we talk about \$500,000 or a million dollars, you're getting up there. Well, we have to make this place as attractive as possible. Let these people know that, you know what, we want you here in Newfoundland and Labrador. There is

something here for you as well. You're not just here to pay for other people or pay for other things or programs, but there should be something in it for them as well. Not just the humility or the intention of helping out the province in any way they can. There has to be something here for them as well.

In closing, Mr. Chair, I just want to talk one 15-second blurb here about what happened in Mount Pearl and the homophobic incidents that have happened across the province here lately. I just have a message for those people. Phobia is an irrational fear; it's absolutely irrational. For those people who are doing stuff like this, be better human beings, please.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. George's - Humber.

S. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to have an opportunity to participate in this budget process this year. For the purposes of people watching, we've completed the vote on the budget a few days ago – yesterday actually. That process starts off with the minister bringing forward the budget and the documents. We have the Estimates, the motions come before the House and usually there are amendments, so there is a lot of speaking.

These are finance bills so there are usually wide-ranging debates and a lot of discussion, and now we're at the stage where we're looking at the related legislation. Last night we dealt with the Supply bill, which allows government to spend the money that was allocated, and we also dealt with the loans act, which allows the government to borrow money, and that was discussed in the budget as well. Today, we're looking at the Income Tax Act, so that's a broad debate as well.

It was interesting to listen to the two previous Members who spoke. The Member for Mount Pearl asked a question: Who likes to pay taxes? I guess, most people don't, and that goes back to –

yeah, there was only one Member who said he liked paying taxes. But I think that's an interesting question: Who like to pay taxes? That goes back, really, to some of the early philosophers about government and what government means. When the Member said that I sort of thought back to my first years in political science doing a political philosophy course. One of the items that I found interesting or thought about when I heard the Member say that was Thomas Hobbes; he made a statement and said that taxation is a cruel, terrible punishment that government exercises upon the people.

If you think about it, people go out, they work and they earn money and then government takes some of their money – takes some of that money they've earned away from them. How do you justify that? How do you justify taking money that people have earned? The only justification, I guess, that government can have for doing that – and I think this is what the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor was getting at – is that the only justification you can have for doing that is government takes the money and uses it for something productive. They take it and use it for something that collectively makes us all better, stronger and better off. I think that's the basis of taxation and why people allow governments to tax them, so that's the genesis of this whole idea.

It was interesting to listen to the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans as well. I have a number of rotational workers live in my district as well, so his points are well taken. I think when people choose to live here in Newfoundland and work away, the fact that they choose to continue to live here, we have to be competitive in the rates of taxation. We also have to provide them with a lifestyle and in the way that we spend the money that we take from them, make something that is good for them and their families. I think that is what we have to do.

As the minister said in her opening comments on this bill, I think it is important that we be competitive. The two things that I like about the taxation – as I say, no one likes taxation, but the things I like about this bill is it keeps us competitive and it focuses on taxing the people who can most afford it so that we can do some good things for the people who can less afford it, and that is good for our society as a whole.

Those are some things about the piece of legislation. When I talked in Interim Supply, a little while ago, I said there were three main questions that we're faced with as a province today. The first question is: How did we get into this situation that we're in? The second one is: How do we get out of this situation? What choices do we have to make? What changes do we have to make? The third question is: How do we build a sustainable situation again in this province? How do we build a prosperous future that doesn't allow us to go back into the situation we're into today?

So those are the three main questions that we have to talk about. Usually, I start off with these three questions and I only get to talk to the first two before my time runs out, so I'm going to start off with question number three this time and talk about that a bit: How do we build a sustainable economy and a sustainable future in the province?

I must say, I have been encouraged by the type of debate we've had here in this budget. Some of it has been non-political, recognizing the fact that we have to make some changes. Changes to the way we've done things; that we're facing a situation where we have to make some changes. I've listened to some of the Members from the other side and I'm really pleased that there seems to be a consensus that we have to do some things to get ourselves on the right track.

In terms of building a sustainable economy, recently I had opportunity with the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture to visit the Marine Institute. While we were up there, it was interesting to have a look at the type of work that is happening there at the Marine Institute. One of the things, in the past, I think we haven't maximized the benefit of our resources. We've allowed some of the benefits to go away out of our province. But I was really encouraged by some of the research that's happening up at the Marine Institute in terms of making us leaders in the field of fisheries. It was interesting to learn some of the research that's being done up there. One of the things that research was being done on was crab pots and how we could build a better crab pot.

Fisheries, agriculture are not always sectors that we think of as technology sectors or tech sectors

that involve a lot of science. But the people at the Marine Institute were doing research on developing a better crab pot that allows the people to catch the individual quotas that they have in a more efficient manner. It allows them to make less trips, burn less fuel, to do it more economically, to be more competitive with other places in the world.

One of the things they were doing was looking at how do they attract crabs to the pot. One of the things they were doing research on is lights. What they've found is that if they put a light in the crab pot, it attracts more crab. From there, they said: Well, what else can we do to attract more crab to this pot? The next thing they started to look at was sound. Can they make a sound that attracts more crab to the pot?

They were able to do that as well, so they were able to increase the efficiency of the crab pots and they decided they were going to make florescent crab pots as well because they were cheaper. Basically, the point of this story is: I think that is the sort of thing that gives me hope that we have a bright future, because people are doing these sorts of things. It is the area where educational institutions come together with our resource industries, and that is one of the ways, I think, we can build a stronger future for this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, the Minister of Finance made a comment this morning that was so true and there are so many people in Newfoundland that would argue about what we pay for income tax versus the rest of Atlantic Canada. She is bang on in her statement that we're on par or less. A lot of people would argue that point, but it is a true fact. We sit here and we question all the time about our income tax.

What is misleading about that statement is that we probably pay more taxes than anyone in Canada based on geography. All you have to do

is look back at the 2016 budget and look at the 350 additional fees or taxes that were added. We can sit here, shake our heads and disagree, but the reality of it is that if we look at the cost of getting goods to this province and we look at what we pay – as an example, you look at a piece of chicken and you think we pay \$17 for a pack of chicken thighs and someone will say: Well, that's not taxed. Well, back up the bus; it is taxed because it is processed in a plant, where taxes are charged. It gets on a truck and it comes across the country, where taxes are charged. People put gas in that truck; taxes are charged. People pay way more for gas here in Newfoundland – way more, especially in taxes that comes back to the province. It gets on a ferry, in some instances, and we pay way too much for that.

If you take a comparison of a good from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI and you compare it to what we pay for it here – especially goods that are taxed. As an example, we'll use a taxable food product – I don't know, like one of those little Schneiders meat packages. We pay \$4.99 when it is not on sale at Sobeys or No Frills or wherever you go. You pay 15 per cent tax on that \$4.99, so you pay 60 cents tax. It doesn't sound like a lot but you go to Nova Scotia, you buy that same product; you pay \$2; you pay 30 cents tax. We pay double the taxes on goods – we pay double the taxes on goods. We can argue all the time about what we pay in personal income tax. The minister is right: We do pay on par or less in some instances. With regard to other things, we pay quite a bit more. It's an unfortunate truth. I don't know that we can afford to pay more.

Certainly, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port had some great points. I listened to this budget debate and one of the things that we talk about is our ability to generate revenue through taxes. Very little discussion about generating revenue through an economy. Very little discussion about ways to create jobs and a path forward. We need to do that. If we want to attract people, we have to find a way to get people to come here and work. We have to find out how we do that.

One of the numbers that was floated was \$15.3 million in revenue created from this additional tax. Well, I'd be curious to know if that \$15.3

million is actually factual based on the fact that we're losing 1,100 jobs on the Terra Nova, possibly. Those 1,100 jobs could be a lot more than 1,100 when it spins over into the rest of the economy, if you look at the indirects.

Then you look at rotational works. The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans made a very good comment about the 20,000 to 25,000 rotational workers and whether or not they decide to stay here. I'll give you a stat that nobody considers: One rotational worker leaves; it's probably two people who have very good jobs leaving. It's not just the person that goes away and works. In most families today, both the husband and the wife or partner work. If they're doing well, we lose that revenue as a province. Not just the revenue from the direct income tax, but from the goods and services they buy.

We miss the boat on that all the time. One normally equals two, and it also equals two or three children. It's families that are leaving; it's not just individuals. It's families. One per cent doesn't sound like a lot. The reality of it is that we have to find a way to generate revenue. I guess if the best we can come up right now is through taxation, then it's where we have to go.

There are a lot of other places. Actually, the Member for Lake Melville brought up a very interesting – several times, actually, in Estimates and he brought it up in one of his speeches this week about stumpage fees. Why not?

Self-checkouts: Think of going to the store. Me personally, I refuse to use them. I won't go to them. I won't go to them because it's jobs. It's people not working and it's businesses making more money. We get nothing for it, not a cent. Why not tax self-checkouts? Why not find a way to make people pay for non-service?

Secondary processing: All you have to do is look to the marijuana industry, aquaculture and different stuff that we have going on here. Even our fishing industry, per se, and a portion of our forestry and mining. Everything leaves to be processed. Those are things that we ought to be looking at here. As a province if we want to become a self-sustainable province, based on geography and population, we have to find a

way to do more. More means secondary processing and doing things ourselves.

We can. We've proven it. We've done a lot of stuff here that is a marvel to the rest of the world. You look to the Hebron Project; you look to Verafin. From a technology – every portion of the sector, everything we touch we do well at. It's just that we have to get into it and get at it. For some reason, we don't find ways to do that.

Like the hon. Member for CBS said, I agree. There is no incentive to come to Newfoundland from a tax standpoint if you look at the big picture. The big picture isn't necessarily personal income tax. It's everything. It's the whole package. We have to look at the whole package.

We have to look at what it costs to live here. The cost of living here is absurd and going to go up. If we don't do something about rate mitigation, it goes up. We're at a breaking point with people. I get calls all the time. I said it yesterday when I spoke. I get calls from people all the time who don't eat steak anymore. Who don't buy certain groceries unless they're on sale. Who don't have the ability to take their children out to see and do things. Who have foregone sports because of – it's dire times. Our solution to create revenue is to raise taxes.

In 2016, the plan was five years. Five years we're going to have that fixed. This is what this is. The budget is so in five years we're going to be on par. In 2017, yeah, we're on target; we're going to be there. In 2018, we're here; we're going to have a balanced budget in 2021. And 2021 is here, guess what? Five-year plan; 2026-2027, we're going to get there. We're going to raise taxes. It's not austerity this year, but buckle up, it's probably coming.

P. DINN: *CHANGE starts here.*

L. PARROTT: Yeah, *CHANGE starts here.* Change started five years ago, apparently, and nothing has changed. Part of the 350 additional fees and taxes that were entered, some of them have been rolled back. The levy and a couple of other things. But most of it remains.

You look at certainly the price of fuel. We look at the price of fuel and we added five cents – and

for a reason. There was a reason. But we ought to have been questioning that reason from the day it was put on there. How long does it last? How long does it go for? Why didn't the other companies apply for that same credit? It didn't happen.

When we tax people extra money, it sends a message about what's to come. Oddly enough, I have had several high-income earners come to me and say: I am more than willing to do my part. I don't disagree; I'm with it. I've had several.

I've also had several come to me and say: I'm already taxed to death. Their comment was never about their personal income tax. Their comment was about fuel. It was about timber. It was about groceries. It was about sports. It was about car renewals. It was about every fee that they pay for everything in this province that's taxed. Insurance: Talk to the bar owners, ask them about their insurance. Ask them the best way that you could help tourism right now: business insurance, get rid of the tax. We hear it all the time. These tourist operators, they yell it all the time.

House insurance: taxed. Everything is taxed. While I understand the 1 per cent and I agree with the Finance Minister that the 1 per cent tax increase puts us not on par – I think we're still a little less than a lot of the jurisdictions in Atlantic Canada. If you look at the full tax scheme and what we pay for goods, services and the fees that we have, it's not acceptable and we need to find ways to be better.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

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

I'll take a few minutes now and talk about a few things from *Budget 2021*. First and foremost, it's always a privilege to sit here and represent the people of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

Something I've had the pleasure to do now for four elections and seven or eight years.

Anyway, I want to start off, Mr. Chair, by congratulating the Class of 2021 who are going through, again, what was not, I'm sure, the graduation ceremonies and conclusion of high school that they would have wished, similar to what would have happened to the graduating Class of 2020 as well. We all know that this is a milestone in their lives and, unfortunately, COVID has altered that.

I wish them all great success: the graduates of Baccalieu Collegiate in Old Perlican, the graduates of Carbonear Collegiate in Carbonear and the graduates of Crescent Collegiate in Blaketown. That's where my constituents actually attend high school, in those three schools. Some of them spill over into neighbouring districts. It's important that we recognize them in this important time in their journey.

Mr. Chair, I've heard a lot in the last two weeks about a vision for the province. I think, in fairness, we all share the same vision. I have been lucky enough to have two children in post-secondary and I can assure any Member in this House that every day I sit here and think about their futures. I can assure you that I will do everything that I can, not only for them but for any child in this province to have the opportunity to stay here. But that comes with choices, and hard choices at that, and choices that we've made in this budget and choices we will have to make going forward.

Again, I've been sitting through budgets since the budget of 2014, I guess, in some ways, and this is one of the best, balanced budgets – unfortunately, it's not balanced in fiscal terms – that I've seen in my time and it lays out a plan. I can assure you our government is committed to that plan, to get us to where we need to be through these difficult times. Nobody would have ever predicted four years ago or five years ago we would go into a pandemic that would last, for all intents and purposes, two years.

I'm going to use two years to segue into the next part of my comments because I'm going to talk a little about the tourism industry and the devastation that that felt from COVID-19, and

that is one industry that will not recover until 2022. An excellent plan of *Together.Again*, and I thank Public Health officials, Minister Haggie, the Premier and everybody involved in that for the work they did around *Together.Again*. We went into a phase of it yesterday on June 15, which expanded some of our restrictions, loosened, and next week we open up to the Atlantic bubble, which is great to see, and I guess one week later we open up to Canada. I can tell you from talking to tourism operators the enthusiasm and the amount of activity they're actually seeing is, I would say, better than expected.

It's still going to be a challenging year. That's why in this budget, Mr. Chair, we put aside \$30 million for the Tourism and Hospitality Support Program. It's very important to us that we bridge that. I express it every opportunity that I can to my federal colleagues. We typically meet every second Thursday with the provincial ministers and federal minister. One of the things that we all request of Ottawa is that when they look at the tourism and hospitality industry going into 2022, the wage subsidy and the rent subsidy programs are something that we feel should be extended for that industry. This industry is without doubt the hardest hit and it's one that programs like this ending in September will cause challenges, maybe more than on some other industries. We will continue to advocate for that.

The Premier's Advisory Council on Tourism brought in any number of recommendations. We've been fortunate. We've been able to actually meet most of those recommendations and we will continue to work towards meeting the ones that are outlined that we haven't been able to achieve just yet. There are so many. It was great to see, yesterday, when Air Canada released their summer schedule, the level of activity that they've committed to already to come back to this province.

We know air access is a tremendous challenge to this province. Access to this province is always a challenge; I'll focus on air right now. Air access has always been a challenge, but never so as it is right now, because the first thing we have to do with regard to air access – and the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans mentioned it earlier. Air access is not only about tourism.

Tourism helps, but air access is multi-faceted. That's why there has been a lot of work done interdepartmentally when it comes to air access by government, realizing that in order to fill up those seats, there are so many different components.

One of those is business; one of those is people travelling for work; then it's tourism and all of those. That's how we fill the seats. We're going to advocate to the airlines to get our capacity back, and then some. It's going to be a very competitive market in doing that. We're working with the Department of Finance; with IET, who is the lead, actually, on air access. We're working with them. We're working with our airport authorities, Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador and others because it's important we get that back. That will be one of the challenges going forward.

One of the things next year that we're really looking forward to – and there will be a lot more, I guess, said about this and a lot more announced around Come Home Year 2022 early in the fall. We want to make sure, first and foremost, we get everything we can out of this tourism season. It's going to be very important next year that we actually all rally around bringing as many people to this province as possible – our expats, our families – and showing them.

The Department of Immigration and Population Growth has been out now advertising the ideas and people's ability to come and work from home, work remotely, come back and work somewhere else in the world, but actually do it from here.

Again, one of the things from this year's budget, for someone from a rural district that has challenges with cellphone coverage, it was really great to see the \$25-million commitment. That is unprecedented, Mr. Chair. We've gone from a program that we instituted back in 2017, maybe 2018; we're in to phase three of the now, on cellphone coverage. That leveraged, I think, practically 4-1 on \$1 million, so just imagine what we're going to be able to do with the commitment of \$25 million to connectivity when it comes to cellular and broadband. That is so important for people who want to work remotely.

It is also amazingly important for the tourism industry that we will have that connectivity and people will be able to enjoy those things on a level. This is not really a Newfoundland and Labrador problem that is unique to us. I have a brother that lives 45 minutes outside of Calgary and he doesn't have cellphone coverage. It is a Canadian challenge when you look at our geography and the way we are built as a country. It is important and the commitment that we've put forward in this budget is, I think, to be commended, the amount of activity that this will provide and expansion.

One other thing in my remaining one minute, would be, again, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and how we have always rolled up our sleeves to do what is needed to be done. I think, quite literally, right now we are rolling up our sleeves to get vaccinated. That is so very important when we talk about the tourism industry and we talk about industry in general. As Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we continue to do that; we get our first shot and then we get our second shot. Then as Canada moves there as well, we can lift even more restrictions and we can get back to doing business as normal.

Mr. Chair, I will conclude. I would suspect that in the next day or so I'll get another opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will certainly echo the minister's comments about the need to get people back into this province and to show off what we have to offer.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about something that I have brought up already: transition and the need for a transition plan. I know we are committed to it and I want to talk about the importance of it, to have one that's nimble. I think it is important, especially when I look at the people in my district, the families, the businesses there; a transition plan is something that is going to benefit them. It is also going to

benefit – I look at my daughter. The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans talked about attracting doctors, attracting people back here. She just passed here OSCE, which, as I understand it, is the Objective Structural Clinical Exam. She is now officially a pediatrician, she can practice anywhere in the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: That's Sarah. I'll let her know that I mentioned here in the House. She is going away for two years to do her fellowship in Calgary. We're hoping that, obviously, there will be a job for her when she gets back. She does want to come back to Newfoundland and Labrador. This is her home. I'll talk a little bit more about that later.

Which is why I think that I come back to why here, within the House, our leader and our party we've been pushing for a just transition plan to move from fossil fuel to cash in on the green economy that's going to benefit workers, that's going to benefit the communities and going to benefit the people of this province.

I'll ask you this: I'm looking to rent a VHS, can anyone direct me to a store? No one, not really. I have a bunch of VHS tapes at home.

AN HON. MEMBER: I have two in my basement you can have.

J. DINN: I said store to rent.

I've got plenty of VHS tapes, but here's my thing: 1976 was the advent of the VHS tape, that's when I graduated. Let's talk about transition. In that time, we had the advent of the camcorder, Blockbuster Video in 1985 and Jumbo Video in 1987, both of which are now defunct. LCD, the cathode-ray television went to the LED and plasma you name it. The first digital video camera in 1993; DVDs and Netflix in 1997. Keep in mind the rapidity at which change occurred. Because I can remember the debate should I get a Betamax player or a VHS player? VHS won out. It evolved that quickly, and you couldn't afford a VHS machine at first, now they're not even a standalone item. They're a niche market.

DVDs and Blu-ray, again vanished. You couldn't get a computer at one time. Can you get a laptop now with a DVD? Not likely. It's now the stick.

Basically, 2003 was the end of the VHS. In 2002, we had the GoPro. We had YouTube in 2005. Blu-ray, 2006. Blockbuster died in 2010. Jumbo Video last in 2018. In 2013, you look at the rise of social media: Facebook, Snapchat, you name it. You can PVR on your machine, you can delay it, playback and record multiple – that's the rapidity with technology. So if I were going to say we need to invest more in VHS, we'd be out of our minds.

I say this because, if anything else, there's a clear message. It's not the only example, but many examples. In 1903, the first flight of Wright Brothers. Now, we're looking at sending commercial flights for people into space – Elon Musk.

I'll ask this question: Does anyone here believe that oil companies, energy companies don't already have a plan to transition to alternate energies? My colleague for Lake Melville said check out Suncor and what they're planning for Alberta. They're already planning massive green hydrogen for Alberta. Alberta – they're already planning it. They are already three or four steps ahead.

Why the urgency from us is that we need to make sure that we are just as many steps ahead. It's encouraging to hear that the province is already looking at having one drafted for this year, but we need to make sure that we do not leave our workers behind; that we do not leave our province behind; that we do not leave our economy behind. We need to look at diversification and transition.

I listened to the Member opposite talk about the advancements in crab pots. Our university is part of that, they are going to be key. Keep in mind also that the move towards a non-fossil fuel world is going to be driven by a lot of people in this province, across the country who are pushing for it. Let's not forget Fridays for Future and the protest that took place on the steps of the Confederation Building. It's coming. Let's be ready for it. Let's capitalize on it. Let's make sure that we are the leaders in green energy.

If we're going to go with electrification, then if indeed the FPSO is at an end, how do we make sure that the workers there are looked after? Well, let's talk about electrifying this province so that anyone with an electric vehicle, whether they drive here or rent one here, they can go anywhere in this province. Let's build the infrastructure. Let's start capitalizing on it.

So the key thing here is what the Third Party, what the NDP has been pushing for is about recognizing the reality and making sure that we're ahead of the game, much like any energy company – they're not even calling themselves an oil company anymore, it is energy because we will need energy. There is no two ways about it. But is oil now like the VHS or the DVD or the next technology? Let's make sure we're on the cutting edge and that the transition plan in place is not going to disadvantage our workers, our province and our economy.

I have three minutes, roughly, and I want to talk a little bit about taxes. Taxes are like anything else, whether I enjoy them or not – I enjoy a good meal; I don't know if I enjoy painting my house, it's something that I have to do but I love it when it's done.

Why do we stay here? Why do I live in St. John's, make this my home when I could easily move to the West Coast where I could pay about half in insurance premiums? That is what it costs. Car insurance is half the price of what it costs here. It is a different zone of the province.

I had the opportunity to visit some very beautiful communities in this province but I will not live there. They're not my home. I am paying more for living in St. John's in property tax, water tax and so on and so forth, but this is my home. Because I am paying for the services, I want roads in front of me, I want a hospital nearby. I want to be able to go out to a restaurant when I want so I'm going to pay for that. That's the price of living in this democracy.

Scandinavian countries pay a lot more than we do. To the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, he hit the nail right on the head, you cannot charge taxes and then expect to lower the benefits. That's what we expect, we will pay it.

A friend of mine, years ago, when we were looking at the big decision: Do we raise insurance premiums or do we cut benefits? I asked him: What do you think Leo? He said: For God's sake don't cut benefits, you'll never miss a benefit until you need it. Raise the premiums and pay for it. So, yes, my health insurance premiums, I'm paying a premium for it, but like another friend of mine said: It's like betting on a horse you hope won't win because if you have to use it, it means you're sick or dead. Hopefully, not both.

I'll talk a little more later about this. The fact is that we demand certain services. We want certain benefits in this society and we want a quality of life. So, yes, we pay for the services we need.

At this point, maybe we can't tax our way to prosperity but I know this much: We cannot cut our way to prosperity either. To me, Mr. Chair, taxes are about an investment and I'll talk a little bit more about that the next time.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

B. DAVIS: Mr. Chair, I thank you for the opportunity to speak here today and to follow my esteemed colleague from St. John's Centre. He sort of gave me a little opportunity to segue because I started with – his brother from Topsail - Paradise was what I was going to talk about. I'll get to Topsail - Paradise next because he's my second favourite Dinn, anyway, so I'm going to get to him next.

First, I would like to say thank you to the people of Virginia Waters - Pleasantville for placing their confidence in me again in this election; it's a humbling experience. I know all of my colleagues in this House feel the same way as I do about how humbling it is to be selected by your peers and to represent them in this beautiful House of Assembly.

I'd also like to say what a privilege it is to be asked to join a Cabinet by the Premier, especially in a new portfolio for me: Environment and Climate Change. I do know the portfolio that the hon. Minister of Tourism, Culture and Arts and Recreation has because I had held that and I know how important it is for the industry that we all work towards supporting them. I know that some hon. colleagues have already mentioned that.

The MHA for St. John's Centre: I have a VHS player and if you want it, I can give it to you. I'm in a very good mood today to give you my VHS player. I am really glad, though, that I had the opportunity to follow the MHA for St. John's Centre –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. DAVIS: That's for the Hallmark movies, yes.

I am really glad, though, I have the opportunity to follow the MHA for St. John's Centre because he did talk about a great point of how we do have to transition. I do want to let him know that talking about electrifying locations across this province for fast-charging stations for vehicles is a priority of this government and has been for the last number of years.

This past year we've put in – or are in the process of putting in – 14 charging stations right across our Island, and I'll go through some of the locations: St. John's, Holyrood, Whitbourne, Goobies, Port Blandford, Glovertown, Gander, Bishop's Falls, South Brook, Stephenville, Port aux Basques, Deer Lake, Rocky Harbour and Corner Brook. That's the 14 that are in place now and, obviously, we need more than that because we want people to make the choice to move to an electric vehicle. It's an important piece and it's a part of our budget movement this year. We're providing \$500,000 to encourage individuals to make that choice, because electric vehicles are a little bit more costly than internal combustion vehicles right now, although the price is coming down; they're becoming more affordable.

The federal government has a program in place to the tune of \$5,000; we have a \$2,500 program in place, but you need the charging networks across this province. The hon. Member is

correct. That's why there's an additional 19 that are being put across the province by Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, which is important, but we're going to need significantly more than that. That's a commitment that we're making as a government, as the federal government as well has committed. I know the business community is going to be putting some in place as well.

I had a conversation with an individual – I think it was just last week or it could have been late the week before – about taking his electric vehicle across the Island. I said how much did it cost? He said \$6 from St. John's to the other end of the province for charging stations across the province. I mean it's impressive. Is there more technology that's going to be done? Every day technology is improving, as the hon. Member for St. John's Centre highlighted the transition from Blockbuster to Jumbo to where we are on Netflix today. I won't rehash that but I think there are a lot of technology changes that are happening almost minute by minute in that industry. We're trying to be on the front end of this industry. That's why we put a program in place to help make individuals want to consider adopting an electric vehicle, which is an important piece.

In the department that I happen to be the minister of now, I'm very excited about some of the opportunities that we have coming up for creating awareness about and education about environmental protections. That's changing every day. It's getting stronger; more people understand how important it is to make those choices. It's dramatic, in the last couple of years in particular, with the youth movement that's happening to try to make people want to consider what's left for them in the future.

I always go back to a former employer of mine who always used to say to me that change usually starts with the young people. Seat belts: Many people in this House of Assembly that are older than I am remember a time when seat belts weren't the norm. For me, it's always been the norm and for some of my colleagues on my side of the House it has been, as well as over here it's been the norm. But the Minister of Health and Community Services remembers a time when there were no seat belts in the car at all.

From my standpoint, what was always told to me by this individual was that the reason why he moved to wearing a seat belt was that every time he got in the car his daughter would tell him: Daddy, put on your seat belt. So it's always the reminder that comes along with it. I think climate change and the environment is exactly the same way. The more we openly talk about it, the more we transition to that, the more young people are bringing those ideas forward. I encourage them every day to want to speak out with what they believe is important to them, because it's going to be important to all of us. We may not see it ourselves today, but it is going to be important to all of us as we transition, if that's the word of the day.

We've seen some great success from current initiatives that we have in the Heat Pump Rebate Program, Energy Efficiency in Oil Heated Homes Program and energy savings programs that we have through takeCHARGE take action. All of these programs have been successful in their own right. So this year in *Budget 2021* we've decided to try to help move that reduction in GHG emissions by investing a million dollars in allocation towards transitioning oil homes to electric homes. Some of those homes would be more costly than others. That million-dollar investment is going to help transition some of those homes to make that decision to become more energy efficient, for one, and hopefully save some money for them, but more importantly for us, help reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that we all want to try to do in this province.

I want to take some time to highlight – because I only have a couple of minutes left – some of the other things that I want people to consider when you're looking at some things to do in preparation for your application process for those individual programs. Now that we have the budget process coming to a close here now, I wanted to make sure when you consider – and we encourage people, when considering electric vehicles, to meet your family need. Start to think about that idea.

Seek purchase opportunities at your preferred electric vehicle dealer. I know one of my colleagues in the House of Assembly was in that industry before getting to the House of Assembly. He knows significantly more than I

would ever dream to know about that industry. Consider what charging infrastructure you'd need in your home. Those are some of the things to consider.

When you're looking at the heating system in your home, consider if you can put more insulation in. There are programs for that, both federally and provincially, both in your attic and in your basement. Consider those options. Bring in the professionals to evaluate those opportunities for you. Make sure you take the opportunity to ask those questions to our department or in other areas, through the federal government or through energy auditors that may be in your community. I encourage you to do that.

Mr. Chair, in my last minute or so, I'd just like to talk about my second favourite Dinn and his comments that he made previously. He talked about the menu. I couldn't agree more; that's a great example of how he talked about the budget being a menu. He didn't know what he was sampling.

Well, on Monday, we voted for what they call Concurrence. That is essentially all the items on the menu. That's the Estimates process. We went through line by line, item by item what we could have in each department. I thought it was an interesting use of the word "menu." Being a guy that likes food, like we both do, I think it was a perfect opportunity for us.

He also highlighted some things that I thought was really interesting. It sort of pivoted me to a particular way of thinking. He talked about the budget titles over the years. I wanted to go back and highlight a couple of my favourites. In 2004: *Protecting our Future* – I loved that title. In 2008: *Securing a Sustainable Future* – that was an interesting one. In 2010, and probably one of the most interesting ones there: *The Right Investments – For Our Children and Our Future*. In 2012: *People and Prosperity – Responsible Investments for a Secure Future*. I think we can all look at budgets and titles and it's all relative to where you are in the time that you sit.

With the last couple of minutes, I'd just like to say thank you to the both brothers Dinn for helping me write my speech today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Trimper) Thank you very much.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm just going to spend a few minutes to talk on the amendment here today from the minister. Mr. Chair, when you hear that we are on par with Atlantic Canada, it's true. There is always a balance between what you would do with the taxes and the revenues that come in. I just want to put it in perspective about Newfoundland and Labrador. Of course, it's human nature; I heard one Member talking about you work hard and you play hard. That's so true. I'll just give an example. We always talk about the expenses that are here and, at times, it is high in taxes. I'll just give you an example.

I know a person very well in the US; they live in a compound area. They had to go to the hospital: \$1,200 for an ambulance. Colonoscopy: almost \$4,000. When you put things into perspective about Newfoundland and Labrador – and people know that I'm involved in a few projects in Africa. Most of the kids can't even afford to go to school. To go to school for a term in Africa, most of the kids can't afford it. Food, lodging and school clothes, \$241, and they can't afford it. So, Mr. Chair, when you look at the taxes that's one part, but the life of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I remember when I was with Clyde Wells back in the early '90s and we brought up the Hibernia and the big cod collapse, and it was devastating. Everybody in this House of Assembly knew people that had to move out or had to realign their jobs. But we found a way. We actually found a way in the province. If you really want something done and resilient, ask Newfoundlanders and Labradorians because we are resilient.

When you look around this whole province and look at the beauty we have and the safety we have. There's absolutely no doubt that people say that their taxes are too high, here's what we should do, and you go to the next person and they say, no, here's what you should – and that's

human nature. That is human nature, Mr. Chair. The balance for all of this is when you collect the taxes and get the services. Like I said, I'm voting for the budget because I will keep the government accountable on the commitment that they made to follow through, and if they do, that's good.

I go back to '89 when Clyde Wells – and there's always adjustments made throughout the time, throughout the period. But there's something we can't forget in this province, Mr. Chair, what a beautiful province we live in, Newfoundland and Labrador. When you can go and climb the mountains with safety, when you can walk the streets and not worry about who's carrying a gun and when you look at your medical – if one of us took a heart attack here today, it would be just gone and taken care of. That's the kinds of things we have to look at. We have to find the balance between the taxation and the services that we have for the people to live.

To me, this amendment that came in, is a balance. I say to the minister now that I will be voting for it. It is a balance. Of course, no one wants to have an increase in taxes. No one wants it. I know the Member for St. John's Centre said it, and it's so true: You don't mind a service until it's taken away from you. You don't mind a service until it's taken away. But when you look at – if it's Liberal, PC or NDP in government, there are a certain number of roads we have to keep clear, a certain number of roads that we have to maintain and a certain amount of services – water, sewer, health care and education – that we have to maintain. The balance for us in this House of Assembly is how do we do it and do it in an efficient and in the best manner to satisfy the people in the province.

I was in Opposition when the PCs were there. They made decisions also that they, at the time, thought it was the best decision for the people of Newfoundland. They probably were. I'm not disputing that a lot of decisions that were made and I know the Leader of the Opposition has said a couple of times, when they were in government, and the thing that he said was: Which school wouldn't you have built? Which road wouldn't you have maintained for safety? When you sit down and look at that question, it's true. That is true. Which school wouldn't we have built? We put them in, schools that aren't

safe and that aren't conducive to study. It is a serious question.

I look in Humber - Bay of Islands, for example. Again, there's the balance for any government, not just the Liberal government now. It's the balance for any government. You take Lark Harbour. They don't even have water and sewer completed yet. There was a bit of an issue back years ago when they wouldn't accept the money. The town at the time had a plebiscite. They wouldn't accept it, but they still don't have water and sewer in the town, Lark Harbour. York Harbour doesn't, but they don't want it because the way they built was more of an acre or a half acre per district. There are services that I'll be standing up and I'll be going to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and looking for. Rightly so. But this is where the balance.

Myself and Heather walk a lot and we do a lot of hiking. If she never said it once, she never said it a hundred times: There's no better place to live than Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: When you're up snowshoeing on First, Second Pond and you have the dogs with you and she looks at you and says: This is my beach; we're safe. We're in an area. We're out in the wilderness.

Mr. Chair, I'm just trying to put a perspective that Newfoundland and Labrador is a great place. It's a great place. Labrador, been up there many, many times as a young fella with Mom and Dad and (inaudible) many, many times. People are beautiful.

I just want to put this in perspective because we hear so much. When was the last time any of us walked in St. John's and worried about someone else with a gun? We haven't. We actually haven't.

I know there's a lot of bantering back and forth and I'm probably one to banter back and forth.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

E. JOYCE: I know, Mr. Chair, people don't believe that, but sometimes I do speak my mind.

There's something I'm going to bring up, a bit of tongue and cheek that I hear. The Member for Torbay –

J. WALL: Beautiful Cape St. Francis.

E. JOYCE: Beautiful Cape St. Francis. What he said the other day is we have to start respecting seniors: When am I going to start getting respect?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: I'm the only one in this place – and I agree with the Member for Cape St. Francis, that seniors are a big part of it.

Mr. Chair, we have to look at all the great initiatives that are in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I understand the Opposition's role and I understand the independent's role; I understand that, I've been there. I have been on both sides, I've been lucky. A couple times I've been on both sides. I've been lucky, Mr. Chair, because you see the perspective. When the Opposition stands up and asks questions about the budget, that is their role. When government is up standing and saying that they have all the information in front of them and they say here's the best decision that we can make: we have to trust that is the best decision.

I can assure you one thing – and I speak very positive here today about it all – except for one or two major incidents – and we don't need to get into none of them, Mr. Chair – the majority of people that have ever made a decision in this Legislature believes it's the best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm a firm believer in that. That is what we have to trust in the government, have to hold the government accountable, but government will make the best decision.

Mr. Chair, when you look at Newfoundland and Labrador, we will find a way to get through all this. We will find a way. All of us will give advice, the government will take some of it. The people, who are very genius themselves of finding ways to get through things, but Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair, is a great place to live. We just have to make it a bit more affordable.

Mr. Chair, if there is anything I can urge the government is the most vulnerable – the seniors and the most vulnerable. We in this House of Assembly, Mr. Chair, we're privileged. We are privileged to be in this House of Assembly – it is a privilege for us to be here, Mr. Chair, but I always encourage the government, whichever government it is, make sure your programs take care of the seniors and the most vulnerable.

It's like mom used to always say: Except for the grace of God, there goes I. If there is anything I could say to the government, we have a great place living in Newfoundland and Labrador, we will find a way to get through all the trials and tribulations that we have, but don't forget the most vulnerable because they are the ones that will lose out more than anybody else.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Any further speakers?

No? Okay.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank you all for your engagement this morning and debate and for your consideration of the points that have been made.

I will say that I know a couple of Members had questions. One was the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands and he asked about comparators to Atlantic Canada. I will say that our bracket and rates are very competitive in Atlantic Canada. In fact, in the Budget Speech there is a very significant graph that really does indicate how much lower we are in some categories in Atlantic Canada. I will say that if we did adopt the brackets and rates of Nova Scotia we would collect \$187 million more in personal income taxes. So it is significant.

I'll just give you a couple of examples. If you earn \$150,000, for example, in Newfoundland and Labrador, you pay \$19,625 in tax. In Nova

Scotia, you pay \$21,561. Just to give you an example. In Quebec, they're even higher than that.

I will say to the Member for Terra Nova who did question whether or not we're taking into account all of the taxation levels, not just the personal income tax. I will say that there was an independent study done in 2018 – and I'm going to quote from the independent committee's recommendations. The report goes on to say – and I'm quoting from it: "Overall, taxation in our province is reasonably comparable to many other parts of Canada. When provincial, regional, and municipal taxation (including local fees for essential services such as water, waste water, storm sewer, and garbage disposal) are combined and compared, Newfoundland and Labrador's taxes are not unreasonable."

So just to make sure that people understand that we are competitive, we should remain competitive, because that does encourage people to locate and continue to remain in the province. It does help to fund health, education, transportation and supporting the most vulnerable. I know we all know how important it is to keep our taxation rates low. We'll continue to ensure that we do everything that we can to make sure that we remain competitive.

On that note, I'll say thank you, Mr. Chair, and look forward to moving on to other pieces of legislation, and to the vote on this one.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000." (Bill 14)

CLERK (Barnes): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant-Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

It is carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

It is carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 14 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 14.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 14.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville and Deputy Chair of Committees.

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

SPEAKER: The Deputy Chair of Committees has reported that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

"That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on personal income."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the resolution be now read a second time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

"That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on personal income."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000, Bill 14.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000, Bill 14, and that the said be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, “An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000,” carried. (Bill 14)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 14)

On motion, Bill 14 read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 14 be now read a second time.

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

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 14)

On motion, Bill 14 read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 14 be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 14 now be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 14)

SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and that its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill “An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 14)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 6, Bill 15.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the Bill 15 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2.” (Bill 15)

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I am pleased today to introduce Bill 15. This deals with tax credits. There is a Dividend Tax Credit contained therein, as well as the new Physical Activity Tax Credit, which is section 17.5 of the *Income Tax Act, 2000*. I am going to deal with the Physical Activity Tax Credit first and then I’ll move to the Dividend Tax Credit.

This is a new tax credit that we've just put in place, Mr. Speaker; the introduction was part of *Budget 2021*. The Physical Activity Tax Credit is estimated at approximately \$7 million. It will be a helpful incentive for families and individuals as they look to access sport and recreational activities. It's part of the narrative of this government to encourage people to have physical activity and health.

Households are able to receive a tax credit up to \$2,000 for physical activity expenses, including memberships, online or in person, and registration fees. Funding will help improve access to activities, helping to create a culture where Newfoundlanders and Labradorians place a greater emphasis on healthier living. It also holds the added benefit of supporting the local health and wellness industry.

Households can claim the Physical Activity Tax Credit on their personal income tax return, beginning with the 2021 taxation year. Please do keep your receipts in order to claim your credit.

An eligible fitness expense must be the cost of registration in an eligible program of physical activity or membership in an eligible organization. Generally, such a program must require significant physical activity contributing to cardiorespiratory endurance plus one of either muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and/or balance. Activities such as hockey or soccer or golf, even horseback riding, wheelchair sports, sailing, bowling, as well as others that require similar level of physical activity will be considered eligible for the credit.

I encourage everyone to get active, whether online or in person, participate in physical activity they enjoy and take advantage of this tax credit. I look forward to seeing the benefits of increased participation in physical activities in the years ahead.

So that's the section of the bill that deals with the physical tax credit. Now I'm going to talk about the Dividend Tax Credit. This is all part of Bill 15, so it's two different tax credits. The Dividend Tax Credit includes technical changes that are related to the Dividend Tax Credit rates. This is related to changes that we just did in personal income tax.

There are currently two provincial Dividend Tax Credit rates for dividends received by an individual: non-eligible dividends and those dividends received from small business corporations at 3.5 per cent, and eligible dividends and those dividends received from large corporations at 5.4 per cent.

The Dividend Tax Credit was designed for the purpose of tax integration for individuals. Tax integration occurs when the owner of a corporation has a choice to take income from that corporation through a dividend or a salary, and it's not influenced by tax treatment. This means that the total income taxes paid by the corporation, plus those paid by the owner, should be the same, whether the owner is paid by salary, dividends or a combination of both.

For example, at the current Dividend Tax Credit rates, the owner of a small business corporation who receives remuneration, say, of a \$100,000 from a company, would pay \$292 more provincial income tax than if they were paid in salary rather than dividends. So we're fixing all this. This bill will restore integration for non-eligible dividends and change the rate for eligible dividends to ensure the effective tax rates remain the same as the rate for non-eligible dividends.

So just for clarity and for certainty, this is only to work in conjunction with our personal income tax. So if you own a business, you can either take your remuneration in dividend or by salary, but you'll be treated the same under the tax act. The non-eligible Dividend Tax Credit rate, i.e. dividends received from small business, would decrease to 3.2 per cent from 3.5 per cent, and the eligible Dividend Tax Credit rate – dividends received from large businesses – would increase to 6.3 from 5.4 per cent. Again, this is to integrate so that there is no disparity and ensure that we have equality between both the personal income tax and the Dividend Tax Credit.

So this bill does speak to two tax credits. The Physical Activity Tax Credit, which I think everyone here would celebrate, to encourage people to be involved in physical activity. Anything that's receiptable, Mr. Speaker, pretty much, is qualified. We'll get into some of those nuances, I'm sure, during –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The level of conversation is getting too high.

Thank you.

S. COADY: I'm sure we'll get to those during debate if there are any, as we go clause by clause. Then, of course, the Dividend Tax Credit, which I just explained, is to ensure that we have what I'm going to call tax integration for individuals.

I hope that was clear, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the discussion and debate this afternoon.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move that we adjourn debate and recess until 2 p.m.

SPEAKER: This House does stand recessed until 2 p.m.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 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 Lake Melville, Bonavista, Cape St. Francis, Baie Verte - Green Bay, Conception Bay East - Bell Island and St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, with leave.

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

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

Today, I'm pleased to recognize the staff and volunteers who operate Apenam's House in North West River, Labrador. For the last five years, this facility has supported those who struggle with addictions and other mental health illness.

Thanks to the dedication of those involved, the treatment centre has continued to operate during the pandemic and other crises for the people of Sheshatshiu and surrounding communities. Hard work has ensured that their clients do not have to leave Labrador to receive their needed care.

The facility is named in honour of Apenam Pone Sr., the first Innu man to attend treatment at the Brentwood Recovery Home in Ontario. When he returned home, he was determined to use the knowledge gained to help his own people with their addictions. He recognized the challenge of having to leave Labrador to access mental health care and then return home without the necessary support. Apenam's House overcomes this problem. It is directly modelled after the lessons taught by this respected Innu elder.

I would like to ask the House of Assembly to join me in thanking all of the team at Apenam's House and for the support of those most vulnerable in our society.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the community outreach from Rex Parsons of Bloomfield. Rex, 88 years young, served in the Royal Canadian Air Force for a short period of time and is a descendant of a marine family.

His father, Skipper Jim, and grandfather, owned and operated the schooner the *Millie Ford* that fished off the Coast of Labrador and transported freight to and from Labrador and the Northern Peninsula. In 1945, without ship-to-shore nor radar, they travelled to Hudson Bay.

Since 2007, Rex and his wife, Rexine, began calling people in the Bloomfield and Musgravetown area to wish them a happy birthday or anniversary. Often, they would sing their greeting. Upon Rexine's passing in 2009, Rex continued the tradition. He will often contact others within the communities to track down phone numbers for those celebrating their special day. Many eagerly await Rex's annual call. One recent recipient commented, I was waiting for your call, when they answered his phone call.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in issuing a sincere thank you to Mr. Rex Parsons for his thoughtful, considerate and commendable community service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Mr. Speaker, the Pouch Cove Volunteer Fire Department was formed in June 1975, and over the past 46 years has provided outstanding fire and emergency services to Pouch Cove and Bauline. Currently, the department has 32 members, of which 29 are trained in Level I and Level II offensive and defensive response.

On June 1, 2017, the department expanded their response criteria to include Code 4 medical calls, greatly improving response times to medical emergencies in both communities. Ongoing weekly training, including American Sign Language and autism first response, accompanied by modern firefighting equipment, including a 2020 Freightliner Pumper added to the fleet in August of last year, makes the department very capable to handle emergency needs from both towns.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize Chief Derek Sullivan on his 30 years of service to the department, the last eight years as chief. His dedication and daily attention to his department's needs is unparalleled, which is shown by the level of respect his members and the residents of the communities have for him.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking the Pouch Cove Volunteer Fire Department for their outstanding service and dedication to the residents of Pouch Cove and Bauline.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. WARR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate all 2021 high school graduates of the District of Baie Verte - Green Bay.

Cape John Collegiate, located in La Scie, MSB Regional Academy in Middle Arm, St. Peter's Academy in Westport, Dorset Collegiate on Pilley's Island, Valmont Academy in King's Point and Indian River High School in Springdale have each held their graduation ceremonies. Graduates of Copper Ridge Academy in Baie Verte are planning their celebration this upcoming weekend.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, high school graduates were unable to celebrate in the traditional manner, including gatherings with parents, families and friends; however, students and teachers alike were creative in ways to celebrate this momentous occasion. Students have proven a pure will to succeed, studying virtually and adapting to protocols and electronic tools to complete high school requirements.

I ask all my hon. colleagues to join me in congratulating the 2021 high school graduates of Baie Verte - Green Bay District and the very best in their post-secondary education and future endeavours.

Baie Verte - Green Bay, Mr. Speaker, is in the greatest of hands.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my honour today to recognize and congratulate the 12 national medallists from Team Newfoundland and Labrador that competed in the first ever Skills Canada Virtual National Competition.

I speak of Julia Keefe, bronze in Workplace Safety; John Bugden, bronze in IT Network Systems Administration; Emily Reynolds, bronze in Electronics; Olivia Taylor, bronze in Public Speaking; Emma Lucas, bronze in Photography; Lee Peters, silver in Job Skill Demonstration; Greg Abbott, silver in Plumbing; Stacey Frost, silver in Architectural Technology & Design; Kelly Whelan, gold in 3D Digital Game Art; Brianna Russell, gold in Job Search; Nick Clarke, gold in Industrial Control; and Brendan Smith, gold in Refrigeration & Air Conditioning.

This couldn't have happened without dedication from parents, coaches, committee members and the board and staff of Skills Canada Newfoundland and Labrador. I would be remiss not to mention Mr. John Oates who recently passed on May 12. John dedicated much of his life to Skills Canada in our province, country and at the world level. Combined, these efforts helped Team Newfoundland and Labrador take their place on the national stage yesterday.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating these difference makers in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave granted.

J. ABBOTT: Mr. Speaker, today I wish to congratulate the St. John's Amateur Baseball Association as it celebrates 75 years of baseball in the City of St. John's.

Many of the city's finest athletes have had the pleasure of participating in the league since its inception in 1947, and that would include our own MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

St. Pat's Ballpark – which was built by the American servicemen stationed in the city during and after the Second World War – has been home for the league for most of its 75-year history, which includes Holy Cross Crusaders capturing the first-ever championship in 1947.

Thanks to the dedication of the many volunteers who have given unselfishly of their time, baseball has been elevated to one of the premier summer sports for youth and adults alike here in the province.

I would like to congratulate Mark Healey for offering himself as president of the board for the past 12 years.

Last Saturday, I was joined by MP Jack Harris, Mayor Danny Breen, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and other guests, including 94-year old Jack Janes who played with the 1947 Holy Cross Crusader champions, to celebrate the opening of the 75th season.

I ask Members to join me in extending best wishes to the St. John's Amateur Baseball Association, its players and fans for this year and subsequent years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Pride Month is a time to recognize and celebrate the diversity and inclusion of the 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

That's why it was deeply disturbing to hear recent reports of pride flags being stolen from

schools, with at least one reportedly trampled and burned.

There is no place for such intolerance in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Several years ago we saw the presence of the rainbow crosswalks causing disturbances in some areas of the province. It is important that we move past this as a province to ensure members of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community feel welcomed wherever they are.

Today, displaying the rainbow is seen as a symbol of support, safety, strength, inclusion and pride. We see rainbow crosswalks and flags throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, including here at Confederation Building.

We must all promote safety and inclusion in our communities, including our schools, so people are free to be authentic versions of themselves.

We are richer as a province because of the diversity of our people who live here. There is room for us all.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me today in calling out hate and intolerance when we see it, and celebrating 2SLGBTQQIA+ people all they add to our communities, our province and our great country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Mr. Speaker, the acts of hatred and intolerance which we have witnessed have no place in this province. We cannot and we will not tolerate hatred toward any group in society.

As this is Pride Month, I want to take this opportunity to recognize and celebrate the inclusion and diversity of people who identify as two-spirit, LGBTQQIA+. As the risk of repetition, I want to be clear, members of the

2SLGBTQQIA+ community are welcomed in this province.

Mr. Speaker, our province is a better place because we have so many people with different life experiences and differing backgrounds. I support the minister when she says there is room here for all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement and join her in condemning the stealing and the desecration of the pride flags.

These acts are abhorrent and speak to the education gap in our society. When someone questions why we have pride events, this hate is why. Right now, one of our neighbours is at home thinking they don't have a place in our society. We're here to tell them that nothing is further from the truth.

The Third Party is proud to be a team of talented and dedicated individuals, 60 per cent of whom openly identify as members of the queer community.

To those at home fearful of living their lives as open, proud individuals because they feel they don't belong, you do belong, you are loved, and there is a place for you in our society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud today to inform this House that one of our government's infrastructure projects has been recognized with an international award.

In March, the 164-bed acute care hospital, which is currently under construction in Corner Brook, was named the best social infrastructure project at the 2020 P3 awards.

The judges were impressed with the cost-effective approach of the project and that it had achieved savings of 12 per cent compared to a traditional procurement.

They also remarked about its co-location with the new Corner Brook long-term care home next door and how its integrating operational capacities between the two buildings.

Finally, judges noted that the project demonstrates a long-term value for money through its geothermal heating and cooling system, which will provide savings over the 30-year lifespan of the contract.

Mr. Speaker, Corner Brook Health Partnership's proposal to design, build, finance and maintain the hospital projected 1,000 jobs would be created over the course of the construction.

Hundreds of tradespeople from Newfoundland and Labrador have worked on this construction site and local contracting companies have secured work.

In addition, due to the collaboration between our government and our industry partners to encourage the hiring of local workers, Academy Canada and the Cahill Group is launching a sheet metal worker program to help meet the demand for local skilled workers required at the site. Their students will also have access to work term placements there.

Mr. Speaker, we congratulate all employees working on this project and we look forward to the day when this hospital opens, leading to a better health care facility for patients and better working environments for health care workers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I welcome the infrastructure that will improve the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This new Corner Brook hospital will be a significant asset for the entire West Coast.

Mr. Speaker, we have continued to speak out about the number of outside workers brought in to work on this project. Surely there are unemployed Newfoundlanders who can do much of this required work.

I commend the hundreds of Newfoundland and Labrador tradespeople who have played a role in this construction. I also think the sheet metal worker program is a great initiative to help meet the demand of local skilled workers.

Thank you very much.

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 an advance copy of his statement.

I understand the importance of accessible access to health care. So I first want to congratulate the residents of the West Coast for their new facility. However, a P3 award established to promote P3s, giving a P3 project a pat on the back rings a little hollow endorsement to me.

Government reduced itself to an accessory role in negotiating the contract with the Corner Brook hospital by hiring a legal firm to act as the public authority. So every financial aspect of the deal is covered by a veil of secrecy, untouchable by the access to information legislation.

We have no idea what the long-term costs of this facility are going to be. We could've had the jobs, we could've had the trades programs and our hospital, along with a much clearer understanding of the true costs. If this project had been funded through a traditional public

process we would've been proved just as successful.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, was the deadline for the deal to save the Terra Nova FPSO and the thousands of jobs associated with it. Nothing has been publicly reported.

I ask the Premier: Does he have an update?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

As mentioned yesterday, that's not our deadline; that was the partners' deadline, as I understand from the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology. There have been regular discussions ongoing and still ongoing. We don't control the deadline. We're hopeful that they continue to push the deadline until they get a deal done to get the value back for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So with no news, did the Premier convene a meeting this morning with the project partners to ask for an update and encourage the asset life extension?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

The minister responsible has been in touch with the operators – again, twice today, I believe – to encourage continuous discussion and dialogue to ensure that the private sector comes to a solution for this private sector problem, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, you as the Premier of this province have an ability and a responsibility to do everything possible to ensure this project moves forward. Last week, the Nalcor CEO said that the Atlantic Loop was his idea and now was the time to develop Gull Island. The Premier's Greene report also calls for the Churchill River to be packaged together.

Are there any ongoing discussions about developing Gull Island?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

As I've said before, there are no ongoing discussions right now. Gull Island is an incredible asset; it's one that we responsibly need to look at. It's one that would be, frankly, irresponsible to blindly turn an eye to.

It's an incredible asset, especially in this time of transition in a disruptive energy marketplace. We need to make sure that we're looking at it, but we ultimately need to make sure it returns the maximum value to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The outgoing CEO of Nalcor has advocated for developing Gull Island, saying, "If you want to do Gull Island, now's the time to do it." We have all of these high-skilled people available to us.

Will the Premier be open with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and talk about what the future plans are for Gull Island?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

I'm sure I share everyone's hope and optimism for Gull Island here in this House, but we need to make sure, given the past experiences with two previous hydroelectric projects, that we do this right, we do it responsibly and we do it prudently so that the returns are Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians', Mr. Speaker. Of course, we need to look at the value of Gull Island; we will look at the value of Gull Island, but it will be done on our terms.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have heard the rumours out of Quebec that the Premier has denied, but now new stories have emerged in the media of secret talks with a major Australian company on hydro and hydrogen development.

Can the Premier clarify who in government is talking to this company regarding Gull Island?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I can advise the Member there are no secret talks. I just did an interview, actually, with the media talking about a call that we did have with Fortescue, who have expressed an interest. They're absolutely a huge company. We've had conversations with them to listen to what they had to say. It would be irresponsible,

as the Premier said, not to listen to people that want to invest in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As it relates to Hydro-Québec or talks in Quebec, I can say to the Member I've literally never had a conversation with anybody in Hydro-Québec in my tenure in this role.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An email was sent to provincial officials from this Australian company titled: Without prejudice, private and confidential commercial agreement.

Premier: Is the province involved in this commercial agreement on Gull Island?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

As the minister said in the previous response, there are no active negotiations on Gull Island. We are open to discussing Gull Island. Frankly, all our assets we've been very open about with anyone who wants to come to the table. Again, we will always approach this with the lens that the maximum returns of any assets we have, have to be delivered to the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

We are certainly open for business; I think it would be wrong and irresponsible to not be open for business. But that business has to have returns to the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier, we may have a difference of opinion on what active negotiations mean, because we're hearing all kinds of rumours about what's happening here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Another email had the subject line: Innu Nation, Fortescue MOU negotiations. Again, this gives the appearance that talks are well advanced and there is an outline of a deal.

When will the Premier share with us, the people of this province, what is happening with Gull Island?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to clarify for people that may be listening. I appreciate the question from the Member opposite, but I don't want anybody to impugn my integrity and honesty. What I can tell you is that there's absolutely no MOU or any kind of deal with Fortescue or any other company. I can guarantee you that. I'm saying that in the House and I will say it outside of this House as well.

That being said, as has been reported, yes, we've met with them. We're willing to engage with anybody that wants to talk about the resources. I believe in some cases they may go and negotiate with our Indigenous governments, which I encourage them to do. Those negotiations are not with us, nor have I seen any MOU or document like that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the minister clarifying that.

The CEO of Nalcor has said now is the time to do Gull Island. Greene calls for the development of Gull Island. Companies in Quebec and Australia are interested in the project.

Will the Premier commit to a worldwide open call for proposals on Gull Island development and bring forward the top three proposals to this House for public debate?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and just to clarify for the record, that's the outgoing CEO of Nalcor who said now is the time for Gull Island.

I'm very happy that this morning I had a call with the new CEO of Nalcor, Ms. Jennifer Williams – actually, we had a conference call with 750 employees of Nalcor – to talk about the value that they bring to this province and to thank them for their time, their energy and their expertise.

What I can say, just to follow up again on the words of the Premier, is that this province obviously does have a history with hydroelectric projects; in fact, we've had an inquiry on them. We have a lot of lessons that we have learned the hard way in this province about this. What I can tell you is that anything we will do will be prudent, well thought out and follow the lessons we have learned and will be in the best interests of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During Public Service Week, we have acknowledged the hard-working and dedicated public servants of this province. The chair of the Public Service Commission has been filled on an acting basis for three years, and for three years now we have been told it will soon be advertised. Again, this year we have learned that the position continues to be filled on an acting basis by a former Liberal candidate.

When will the government finally appoint a non-partisan, permanent chair for the Public Service Commission?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This was an important question – not inflammatory in the least, but an important question. Mr. Speaker, as the public knows, as we all know in this House, we have made important changes to the Public Service Commission within the last year. I think it was in the fall of 2020 we made some important changes, moving back some of the roles and responsibilities and increasing the responsibilities of the Public Service Commission.

The Public Service Commission does an incredibly important, removed-from-government job of making sure we have professional candidates for positions. It makes sure that we have, for example, our EAP and things of that nature. We're moving forward with the continued development of that organization and continued strength of that organization on behalf of the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I just ask: Will this position be put before the Independent Appointments Commission and advertised this year?

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

S. COADY: That is the intent, Mr. Speaker. We have been moving forward on that position. As the Member opposite is well aware, that position has been brought forward.

As we continue to – what I'm going to say – expand and grow the roles and responsibilities of the Public Service Commission, we're looking for the best possible commissioners. Of course, that will be moving forward, I'm sure, with due course and hopefully very soon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Newfoundland Liquor Corporation released its fiscal year-end financial results, which showed the Liquor Corporation delivered \$195 million to the Provincial Treasury.

I ask the minister: Do these record profits affect your decision to sell off the Newfoundland Liquor Corporation?

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

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

The Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation did provide \$194 million last year in dividends. That will actually hopefully increase this year, Mr. Speaker, because it helps to provide health and education for the people of the province. It wasn't a deciding factor in the government looking at the sale of any asset. We are doing the analysis, the due diligence, the requirements to consider the sale of assets, considering the amount of debt this province owed and a lot of it to Muskrat Falls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: Have you included the revenue from the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation in your revenue projections for the next five years?

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

S. COADY: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, given that they've included the revenue from the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation in their revenue projections, can we then assume that the sale of the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation is off the table?

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

S. COADY: Mr. Speaker, it was only a short few weeks ago that I stood in this House, read the Budget Speech that talked about the sale of assets in this province – the consideration of the sale of assets, the review, the due diligence, the work that needs to be done on the sale of those assets for consideration of paying down debt and funding a future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Member opposite knows that is the direction of government and I think he should accept that is the way we are going to proceed. We are going to look at what assets might be available for us to use to pay down debt. I think the Member opposite has the answer to his question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: So, Mr. Speaker, they are going to sell off an asset that gives them \$195 million to the Provincial Treasury which they have budgeted for the next five years and we have no details on which that decision was made. The Greene report talked about and said that it should be privatized.

Can the minister table the information that was provided by her officials or others to inform this recommendation to sell off the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation?

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

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

I will say that the Budget Speech – if he sat and read the Budget Speech, it talked about doing the analysis and review as to whether or not we

will move in this direction. It also noted that we'll look at other potential assets: oil and gas assets, Marble Mountain, real estate. We're going to do the full analysis and review. We'll do the due diligence and take the time to consider what is best for the people of the province moving forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I have sat and read through the Budget Speech and there are a lot of details that are missing, and that's for sure when it comes to this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I still find it ironic that on the one hand we are talking about selling off an asset while at the same time we're budgeting for the next five years to have roughly \$200 million in revenue coming in from it.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister indicated her revenue projections contained \$35 million per year from Terra Nova royalties and an additional \$35 million from other economic spinoffs such as personal income tax.

How does the minister plan to address this \$70-million problem should the Terra Nova not proceed?

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

S. COADY: First, allow me to address the preamble of the question. This is a fulsome budget, Mr. Speaker. There are financial projections included therein. We are being open and transparent of the transformations that we are undertaking in this government to modernize and improve service delivery in this province.

So I'll say to the Member opposite, if there's information that he requires we'll be happy to address some of his concerns as we move forward with those transformations. The budget, he's gone line by line by line through the entire

budget, Mr. Speaker. He should have the answers to the questions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: With regard to Terra Nova, the \$35 million in royalty that is contained I'm sure – as we move forward through the forecast – we will see that the asset life extension continues, or if there is other development in the oil and gas industry.

SPEAKER: Time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: On top of the \$70 million per year loss, potentially, there is also the potential payout – according to the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology – of another \$150 million, should things go south with Terra Nova in terms of the royalty regime. That means there could be a budgetary gap of \$220 million.

I ask the minister: Given this information, is it even possible to have a budget balanced by '26-'27?

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

S. COADY: First of all, let me correct some of the errors that were in his statements. First of all, the \$35 million in royalties is over multiple years, as I stated yesterday. Sometime late '22, early '23 we have budgeted for royalties, Mr. Speaker. Those royalties would continue into the fiscal forecast. So it's \$35 million potential gap if the asset life extension does not continue.

Mr. Speaker, always, including in the previous governments, including this government, we always knew that when it came to conclude the projects that are offshore there would be a requirement to do a payback on the royalties for some of the abandonment costs. We will be moving forward, if the asset life extension doesn't continue, if there is a requirement for abandonment –

SPEAKER: Time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: So, Mr. Speaker, we're looking at \$200 million, potentially, from Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation, gone; we're looking at another potential \$220 million, perhaps, as a result of the things that are happening with Terra Nova.

So again: How do you plan on balancing your budget by '26-'27?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

S. COADY: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, everything that the Member opposite just said is erroneous. It's completely off base, and he knows the difference.

I will say to the Member opposite –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: – there is \$35 million in the entire fiscal forecast for Terra Nova. Should the asset life extension not continue, that would be in jeopardy? But I am certain that there are other opportunities in oil and gas that may make it up, Mr. Speaker.

With regard to any asset review that we would be doing, all of the information would be considered and contained in any future financial forecast.

He is now making suppositions and he is now making erroneous statements.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: With all due respect, again, these are her numbers, not mine.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Thirty-five million dollars in royalties, \$35 million in taxes, \$195 million from Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation, \$150 million potential payout if Terra Nova doesn't go ahead. Those are not my numbers; those are her numbers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Now I will ask the minister, and take her up on her earlier comment: Will she table in the House the actual details on her projections, including all of the assumptions that are being made?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the Member opposite just acknowledged how transparent this government is in providing information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: So I thank you for finally acknowledging that we are transparent in what information we provide this House of Assembly.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I know he is the naysayer with regard to the asset life extension, I know he's a naysayer about growth and continuing opportunities in our oil and gas, and clearly he's a naysayer when it comes to what potential we may be able to use Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation as an asset in the asset portfolio.

But allow me to tell the Member opposite, and allow me to tell the people of the province, we're going to do what's best for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have a serious debt problem and we're addressing it. We are making the transformations and the modernizations to improve things for this province.

I ask the Member opposite: Why isn't he supporting it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear the minister say that she wants the people of the province to know exactly what's going on. Well, I would say to her: Give the people of Newfoundland and Labrador the details on her projects, including the assumptions, and table them in the House of Assembly.

Will you do that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Mr. Speaker, we go line by line by line, hundreds of hours in this House – hundreds of hours – ministers available, officials available, talking to the Members opposite –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: – providing the information. We have had multiple Members opposite acknowledge that. Multiple Members opposite acknowledge the information that has been provided to them.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying to the people of the province that we have a budget that we have just passed last night, not by the support of the Opposition, but by the support of the majority of this House of Assembly. I will say, Mr. Speaker, we have a very solid budget. I can say that the bond-rating agencies have spoken in favour of what we are trying to achieve. I can say to the people that we are actually making the advancements and doing the action to finally set this province on a strong fiscal course.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will determine that it is a fair request to table the projections for the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Tourism operators and, in today's Telegram, the chair of HNL have spoken out about the lack of workers available for the coming season as the province is set to reopen July 1 for Canada.

Mr. Speaker, what is the human resources plan for the industry as we prepare to welcome these travellers?

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.

It is a very good question and it's one that we've been entertaining for quite some time.

This is something that has been on the agenda of HNL and also on the PACT committee. One of the reasons why we have put such substantial supports in place this year for the tourism industry is around the fact that they need to get up and running again. One of the challenges that tourism has right now is they were the hardest hit industry and retaining those employees was very difficult. I've had conversations with my colleague in Immigration and Population Growth, his department, and there are many things that we're looking at.

One of the most important things here, Mr. Speaker, is the suite of programs that we've put together for the tourism industry this year to help them rebuild. Our commitment to that industry will remain until it's back on its feet.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, Brenda O'Reilly says in *The Telegram* the big obstacle is finding workers. As we discussed, our marketing campaigns and ads are encouraging people to come explore our province; however, if businesses cannot find staff, their doors will have to remain closed or the experience will be less than expected.

What is exactly in the budget that the minister is expressing that's going to help these individuals or these businesses find the workers needed?

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

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

I want to thank the hon. Member for the question and for Brenda O'Reilly's input as chair of Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador. She's done a fantastic job with the entire industry. Identifying issues and working with government for a resolution.

We have a three-pillar plan. One is to invest upwards of \$230 million in job training, skills development for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who don't have the skills, who want to enter into an industry to get into those industries.

The second pillar of our plan, Mr. Speaker, is to work directly with the federal government identifying those who have been recently laid off. Our government just signed a memorandum of understanding to identify those who are facing job shortages.

The third pillar, Mr. Speaker, is immigration. Bringing new skills, new talent to Newfoundland and Labrador to fill those needed jobs, and that's where we will be successful.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista

C. PARDY: According to Destination Canada, Mr. Speaker, our province saw 10.8 per cent of

active tourism businesses depart the market. I understand that from the \$30 million that was out to incentivize businesses in the last year, \$12 million remained unspent.

Now, to change course, the Premier announced that we are joining the Atlantic Loop on June 23.

What provisions have been made for travel to and from St. Pierre?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

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

There was a lot in that question.

Mr. Speaker, we've done tremendous work with the tourism industry. It's unfortunate that there was that loss of 10.8 per cent, but the hon. Member should realize that if we didn't put the supports in place that we did, if he would have went on to talk about what the Premier's Advisory Committee on Tourism said, it would have been much worse this year. That's why we put those supports in place.

Mr. Speaker, our conversations around the St. Pierre borders or St. Pierre, unfortunately, is not one that we control. That is a Government of Canada jurisdiction. We've raised it. I raised it in my talks with my federal colleagues. I know the Minister of Health and Community Services has had it on his. But again, Mr. Speaker, that is a decision forthcoming from the federal government. I think if you look at recent media reports, you may hear something out of Ottawa in the next few days of how they plan the reopening of the international borders.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we see the world change around us due to climate change, Dr. Robert Way, a professor at Queen's University and Labradorian, has documented that Labrador is warming two times faster than the Canadian average.

I ask the minister responsible for Climate Change: Will he commit to a full study into what this province needs to address this alarming issue and prepare for the future of our residents?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for a very important question.

He's very correct that the global climate is warming; that's why we've taken action on 43 action items out of the 45 that we put in place for our Action Plan. When we get moving with that plan, we're going to see some very big decreases in greenhouse gas emissions over the period of time. We've committed to, with the federal government, making sure we hit net-zero emissions by 2050 and we're going to continue to focus on that.

I look forward for a follow-up question from the hon. Member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Mr. Speaker, we are seeing more and more violent weather in this province which has taken its toll on our province's infrastructure and its people.

I ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: Has a study been done on the effects of climate change on the province's infrastructure and what, if anything, is taken into consideration in new builds and designs?

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

B. DAVIS: I thank the hon. Member for the question, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, obviously when we do flood-risk mapping in this province, we always take into account climate change and factors in climate change – one of the first jurisdictions in the country to do so.

I know that we work with my hon. colleague in Transportation and Infrastructure to ensure that those infrastructure improvements, when they need to be made, are made and ensure they're big enough to handle those climate change facts that are happening as we move forward into this climate that we live in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Mr. Speaker, climate change has both a physical and a financial impact on this province.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Has the department calculated the extra costs associated with the impacts of climate change on this province and, if not, will she do so?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very excited that we're talking about climate change. It's a very good opportunity from not just – there is a cost associated with it, but it's an awful good opportunity from an economic standpoint as well. We've got the creation of jobs and 650 direct person-years of employment based on what we're doing under the climate Action Plan we put in place, based on what we're working with – just one fund, which is the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund, which we've partnered with the federal government on. We've announced 13 projects just recently at the tune of about \$8.1 million.

When those are fully installed, we're going to see some net reduction of about 830,000 tons of greenhouse gas reductions in this province. So that's moving forward and every action we make is a step in the right direction. Do we need to do more? Yes.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Mr. Speaker, during the last General Assembly, a Democratic Reform Committee was established by this hon. House with a mandate to improving our democratic and electoral system. This Committee met on a number of occasions and was just about to initiate a public engagement process on campaign finance reform but was subsequently shut down when the Premier decided to call a general election.

I ask the Premier: Will he reinstate this Committee in its existing form so we can move forward with this important work?

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

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

As the Member opposite would know, that was a part of the mandate that was given to me as Government House Leader by the Premier. We will be re-establishing a Committee on Democratic Reform, as we have with all Committees here in this House.

Right now I am a Member of the Committee on the Elections Act and we're doing that piece of work, but we will start to do the piece of work simultaneously in the coming weeks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I hope it will be in the same form and representation as the last Committee.

Mr. Speaker, the recent provincial general election was riddled with many inconsistencies, potential breaches of the Elections Act and resulted in many people in this province being

denied their democratic right to vote. Heading into the election, the Chief Electoral Officer stated that Elections NL was prepared to hold a pandemic election. This obviously proved not to be the case. I realize the Minister of Justice has been tasked with updating the Elections Act; however, this has nothing to do with holding an Officer of the House accountable for his actions.

I ask the Premier: Will you initiate an independent investigation of the election and subsequently table a report in this hon. House for debate? Not interested in the legislation, not interested in court cases; will you present a report after an independent investigation and have the Chief Electoral Officer accountable to this House of Assembly?

SPEAKER: The question is not in order. The operation of the elections is not a House matter.

P. LANE: (Inaudible) to the House, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: It is with the Legislative Branch, not within the House.

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The petition I am presenting on is climate emergency declaration, a petition to the House of Assembly.

We, the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, bring the attention of the House of Assembly to the following:

WHEREAS according to the document, *The Way Forward on Climate Change*, the province is already experiencing the effects of climate change; Newfoundland and Labrador joined the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change* in 2016, but it is not on track to meet the 2020 targets; financial costs resulting from climate change will unequally impact municipalities, due to the responsibilities set out in the *Municipalities Act, 1999*.

THEREFORE, our petitioners call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to: declare a climate emergency; establish a task force on decreasing the effects of the climate crisis while building community resilience; consider climate change in all policy and decision-making.

If tabled in the House of Assembly, the petition document will be a document of the House of Assembly and the name and address of every person that signs it will be available to the public.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of minutes. I just want to talk on the importance of this petition. It talks about declaring a climate emergency. Now, when we talk about global warming, everybody says that something needs to be done. But unfortunately, the impacts from climate change are slow. Sometimes we get torrential rains which cause flooding. We may have heavy rainy seasons. We may have a lot of snow, like Snowmageddon. But most of the population doesn't really feel the impacts of global warming.

Therefore it allows the governments, whether they're a provincial government, a federal government or governments on an international level, to be slow to actually do something. What we fear is that by the time people wake up and start declaring that something needs to be done, it's going to be too late.

When you look at the Northern regions, the Northern regions are an indicator, similar to the canary in the coal mines. When the air in the

mines was getting toxic, the canary would stop singing and then the canary would die.

In the Arctic and in Northern Labrador and across Canada, we are like the canary. We see the effects of global warming. We rely on snow and ice for our transportation for our food sources. What's happening now is that we don't get good ice to travel on. We don't get good snow conditions so we can go out and hunt and haul wood to heat our houses. We are the canary in the coal mines. I think that this petition is a step forward to make sure that as a province we are responsible and we start taking steps, Mr. Speaker.

This petition has over 2,000 signatures already and they'll be continuing to collect them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains but also the 2,000 signatories on her petition. Thank you very much, I look forward to that coming over to the office.

I'm very happy that we've had a great discussion today and questions on the greening of our economy but also climate change. I think it's important what the hon. Member has said. There are noticeable changes in certain areas in the country and the globe, faster than others, and she's 100 per cent correct on that. That's why we've taken action on some 43 of our 45 action items, either in part or in full completion.

This is going to stimulate clean energy as well as clean growth in the economy. We've committed to our 2050 net-zero emission targets with the federal government. We're working very closely with them. I look forward to working with the hon. Member as well, because I understand she has a very strong background in this as well.

To all of us, everybody in this House of Assembly has a role to play here in making sure

that we move things forward. One of the things in our budget just this past day that has been passed, we put forward investments into EV adoption programs, electric vehicle adoption programs, as well as the conversion of oil heating homes that are primarily serviced by oil to move to electric. That's a start.

By no means is it going to fix all the problems, but those changes that we're making will move forward and continue to go forward. One of those things that we've done is just a recent announcement through the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund. Some of those investments have been made in Labrador as we speak. I'm looking forward to getting up there this summer to announce some of those.

They're going to make a meaningful difference in what we see on a go-forward basis. Some 830,000 tons of greenhouse gases –

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

B. DAVIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, residents of Exploits have a great concern from the result of the 24-hour emergency service cut to the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre in Botwood. All residents feel that the 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. service does not adequately and efficiently address the emergency requirements of this district, affecting both patients and residents to achieve adequate care when needed.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to restore the 24-hour emergency service at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre immediately.

Mr. Speaker, this has been an election promise now three times. In 2019, the former premier promised the 24-hour emergency service. In the fall of 2020, in *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, the minister committed to keep the promise of the previous premier. In the 2021 election, it was announced that the 24-hour emergency service would open. I have a quote here from the

literature of the candidate: We delivered on the extension to the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre and we will deliver on the 24-hour emergency service at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, is this another election promise? It's been done three times. This was endorsed by the Liberal Party. I'm assuming it was. I don't see the candidate just coming out on his own and saying they were going to reinstate the 24-hour emergency service in an election, and the government let him go out and mislead the people. I can't see that, Mr. Speaker. They must be going to do it.

Actually, this week, Mr. Speaker, the long-term care unit, the \$6.1-million unit, the minister says that after that was completed, they would reinstate the 24-hour emergency service, not match the needs as needed. They want the 24-hour emergency service opened.

Mr. Speaker, that unit was turned over today and residents are being taken at the long-term care unit in Botwood. I'd like to have the minister's response of when he's going to open the 24-hour emergency service, and not play around with the answer, but give us a straight, direct answer, come out and open the 24-hour emergency service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Any further petitions?

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm presenting another climate emergency declaration petition to the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador with another 590 signatures.

We, the undersigned residents of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, bring the attention of the House of Assembly to the following:

WHEREAS according to the document, *The Way Forward on Climate Change*, the province is already experiencing the effects of climate

change; Newfoundland and Labrador joined the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change* in 2016, but is not on track to meet its 2020 targets; financial costs resulting from climate change will unequally impact municipalities due to responsibilities set out in the *Municipalities Act, 1999*.

THEREFORE, our petitioners call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to: declare a climate emergency; establish a task force on decreasing the effects of the climate crisis while building community resilience; consider climate in all policy and decision-making.

As I said, 590 on this petition and there will be more coming, Minister.

Keep in mind, I pick up on what my colleague for Torngat Mountains said, the book by Shelia Watt-Cloutier, a Canadian Inuit activist on *The Right to Be Cold*, there are cultures, people who depend on ice and that for their way of living, their culture and their livelihood. There are whole ecosystems that are built on it. We look at the whole notion of permafrost and what that might do to the release of CO₂.

But more importantly right now, I think we need to be doing more. It's great to look at what we're doing; we need to start putting more money towards the transition to clean energy.

What this petition is asking for, Mr. Speaker, is to establish a task force and to start putting climate policy into all policy and decision-making; that's what this petition is calling upon and that's what I'm asking the minister to take action on.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member, similar to what I said to the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains, I look forward to working very closely with you and some 590 people as signatories on this petition, I look forward to getting it.

Some of the things that I ran out of time talking about: we've seen great success in the energy efficiency in oil heating homes program that we put in place. To say that we're not moving fast enough, I would tend to agree. We have to move faster, we have to continue to make investments. The federal government has announced some \$18 billion over a number of years in their most recent budget that we're going to wait for some details on to see exactly how we can avail of those and cost-shared mechanisms and, hopefully, 100 per cent dollars coming from the federal government for these initiatives as well.

So working very closely with municipalities is one of the key pieces that the MHA from St. John's Centre had mentioned, ensuring that we have resilient infrastructure in place that can tackle climate change problems that we're facing and he raises a great concern about the way of life of Indigenous people that are being changed by the changing weather patterns and the changing ice flows.

In my previous roles as minister responsible for technology, I looked very favourably on the SmartICE program that was started by – and used very actively. I can see the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains nodding her head. It was an amazing initiative that's worked on by Indigenous peoples as well as people from all over this province to ensure that the ice is safe for people to go out on, and that changes on a daily basis, hourly basis in some cases.

I look forward to working with both hon. Members and every one in this House to make sure we can leave something better for the people that come behind us for sure.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 6, Bill 15.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know I've been given an hour. I think our leader was going to speak first but I will speak now. I don't think I'll need a full hour but I could speak for a full hour because while I may have disagreements on some things in the budget, and may have disagreements over certain parts of the budget, I can't help but be extremely pleased to see this type of initiative in our budget. The only thing, I guess, I would have liked more is perhaps to see more money spent on it than less.

I've been involved in sports all my life. I used to tell people that I started off as a player then a coach and then an administrator. I used to say I wasn't good enough to be a player so I became a coach. I wasn't good enough to be a coach so I became an administrator. But, at the end of the day, I certainly benefited from the ability to play sports in this province of ours. As a coach, I've had the pleasure of coaching at different levels, whether it was the high school girls' level or high school boys or the university level.

As an administrator, I've had the opportunity to work both provincially and nationally. When it comes to physical activity, it not only enhances the physical part but it does so much for your mental capacity and gives you the confidence to be able to go out and speak in public and to be strong. Anything we can do to help get people moving in some form of physical activity is a good thing. It always is a good thing and will be a good thing.

I have to admit, though, I was really excited first when I read the Budget Speech about it and heard it because I was looking at it as a refundable tax credit up to \$2,000 per family. Families out my way said: Wow, we're going to get \$2,000 back. Unfortunately, like I said, sometimes the details aren't there; it's actually a tax credit. Again, on an expenditure up to \$2,000, the refundable credit of 8.7 per cent will result in approximately \$174 back to a family. Again, a good initiative, the fact that people can get money back.

We talk about health care a lot in our province. Of course, one of the social determinants of health is income. The only concern I have here is whether or not people who can't afford to pay that type of money upfront and how you might be able to accommodate, somehow or other, people in those lower income brackets. I'm sure there's a way of working something to allow them to participate. I know the Premier has talked a lot about the community support groups and the not-for-profit groups.

There's so much benefit to be gained from this initiative. I truly believe that if you want to reduce health care costs, this is one of the ways you have to do it. As I said, I think I'd be ready to vote on any kind of funding dedicated to activity and physical activity that will help our kids and our adults get out.

I think we need to encourage people, too, that physical activity doesn't necessarily have to be about a gym membership. If you're walking to the post office every day to pick up your mail, that's a physical activity. The guy that's out chopping his wood, it's a physical activity. There are lots of physical activities that are going on for people that we can help that will help find a way – I don't know if this fund will apply, but we need to encourage people that there are lots of different things you can do to stay healthy.

We've all heard of the ParticipACTION programs and all of those things but, again, this goes the extra step. This is an extra step because we're now, as people say, putting our money where our mouth is. We're actually giving money back to people to say: If you make an investment, we're going to give you – now, it's not everything, but it's something. It's a good start. That's the way I'd look at this, as a good start.

Certainly, like I said, there's nothing that we would argue about this. The only thing I said I would be concerned about is how do we make sure that the people who perhaps can't afford up to \$2,000 find a way. I like the idea that it covers so many different types of physical activity and that it's not limited to a traditional sport, whether it's yoga, whether it's dance –

AN HON. MEMBER: Horseback riding.

T. WAKEHAM: Yes, exactly. It's open to all kinds of different physical activities.

I hope that the first thing, the minister will come in a few months from now and say: B'y, the entire fund that we put in has been used up because everybody is taking advantage of it, and next year we have to double it. That's the type of benefit I see from this.

Like I said, I could go on forever here, but I don't see the need to do that. I can talk about the benefits of sport on physical and mental health, and talk about all kinds of stories that we all have about people we know who have been so impacted by sport and that changed their lives around because of it. I really believe this particular initiative is certainly one that we all support.

Again, I'm not going to spend a lot of time. I just want to say I commend the government for introducing this. I look forward to how it can be rolled out to ensure that we don't leave anybody behind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to continue on where my colleague left off. Looking at this bill here, it has a lot to do with our overall health of the province. Health actually impacts our mental wellness as well as our physical wellness. It also impacts the health care system. Anything we can do to encourage people to engage in physical activity and recreational activity, we'll see much, much dividends. So this is a really good investment.

Now, one of the issues that I sometimes struggle with is being a critic, because part of my role is to critique what's being put forward, but not from a criticism perspective. Basically, my responsibility as an MHA in Opposition is to make sure that the policies put forward are for the betterment of everybody. One of the groups that I find sometimes falls through the cracks is our most vulnerable, our low-income families.

Also, what I'm starting to see now as MHA from a rural district is that rural Newfoundland and Labrador sometimes falls through the cracks. Not intentionally. Not by being intentionally excluded, but sometimes the policies are not far reaching; actually, the policies can't be taken advantage of by rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is a refundable credit of 8.7 per cent on an expenditure up to \$2,000, which is really, really good. One of the things that I thought when I originally heard it – and I think most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians sort of heard on the surface the same thing – is we will get \$2,000. If you have a family of five that's involved in a lot a recreational activities, you're looking at – wow, that's going to be a huge benefit to me and my family. But in actual fact, the information that we were given is that at the end of the day the refund is up to \$174. People need to look at that from a realistic point of view and to realize that it's not \$2,000.

That can impact a lot of families. One of my sisters has five kids; they're all very physically active. They're involved in sports; they're involved in all kinds of recreational activities. In actual fact, me as a single person – I'm eligible to get up to that \$174 just the same as her, so that doesn't appear like a very level playing field. It would be more encouraging if we actually had more for people who had larger families or more participation.

We would also want to make sure that the low-income families have equal access to it. One of the issues with low-income families is they're usually – especially if you have children – living paycheque to paycheque. That's one of the burdens with low-income families. Therefore, for this, to get your \$174 it has to be at the end of the year, so you have to put the money up front. A lot of families won't be able to avail of this because they don't have the money up front to put in the investment. That might be something we could look at next time.

It's important for us to make sure we include low-income families, to make sure that they have the same access. If not, it's only people who have more disposable income, which usually are people with more money. Also, a lot of families don't have access to a credit card. Or

if they do, it's usually maxed out. It's very, very important.

Another thing, when I attended the technical briefing, I talked about what's eligible. One of the things that were a little disappointing for me is that the fitness equipment is not eligible for this tax credit. Now, a lot of rural Newfoundland and Labrador – rural areas – don't have gym facilities where they can go in and pay a fee, get their receipt and they can work out. A lot of rural Newfoundland and Labrador don't have organized activities. If they are, usually they revolve around hockey, basketball, volleyball, the regular sports. What happens if you or your children are not interested in those particular activities? It can be a form of exclusion. So that's something that we need to be more aware of.

I was very pleased, though, one of the questions that I asked during the briefing was about say, for example, the smaller expenses. Because in a lot of my communities if we're lucky enough to have say, for example, a hockey rink or a gymnasium, a lot of the activities are you pay as you go. So for a public skate, \$2. Some people may skate three times a week. The good thing with this tax credit is if you keep your receipts and you submit them or you have them available, you'll be able to get the reimbursement. That's very, very important.

As I was saying, anything that encourages physical activity. Because we are going through also a health pandemic where we're dealing with inactivity of our children now in the schools and through the education system. Through their youth, they're not as active. That's actually going to be a huge burden on our health care system. We're already seeing the increase in Type 2 diabetes. We're also seeing the increase in high blood pressure and other cardiovascular diseases and conditions. So it's very, very important that we actually encourage people to be active.

Like I said, for low-income families and for rural Newfoundland and Labrador, it's going to be difficult for people to avail of these services. When you look at rural Newfoundland and Labrador – and I speak from experience in my district – sometimes programs put forward have good intentions; for example, the construction

rebate. This Physical Activity Tax Credit is similar to the construction in some ways. In my district, I don't think anybody actually was able to take advantage of that rebate – the construction rebate – where you actually had some building material, some construction or some repairs and then you got 25 per cent back.

I don't think anyone in my district was able to avail of that, even though they built sheds; they actually put extensions on their houses; they repaired their roofs, all during this time frame. They couldn't avail of it because they didn't actually have somebody in their community or somebody in the district that was registered. Very similar, too, with this tax credit is if there's nothing there that they can actually spend the money on, that they can get a receipt for, then they're not going to be eligible. We need to make sure that all those people don't fall through the cracks and they don't miss out on it.

Even in St. John's – because I remember when I was a university student, I was doing the intersession. When I was going to university, I had no money. I had very little money. During intersession, I was actually doing some jobs building fences. That's how I was making my money, putting me through intersession. I was there. It was in June. I was building a fence down in the area there down where Tulk's used to be.

I was putting in the post and these two little girls came over and they were very mad at me because I was putting up a fence and they wouldn't be able to cut through the yard. The owner came out, who I was building the fence for, and she said: Aren't you supposed to be in school? These two little girls, one was probably seven; the other one was probably nine. They said: No, Mommy is keeping us out – they didn't say mommy; that's my word – Mom is keeping us out of school today. We asked why and she said it's some sort of day.

What it was – I can't remember now, but it was a day where they actually ended school; they had all these recreational activities. There was going to be a lunch, so Mom was going to have pay 50 cents for each of them to go, which was a dollar. Mom didn't have the money. That's what these two little girls said: We can't go. They wanted to go. It was going to be a lot of fun.

Going to be hot dogs. Because the mom didn't have a dollar, they didn't get to go.

That's what low income looks like. That's access to recreation. That's access to end-of-school events. For us, a lot of times we lose perspective because we have money coming in; we have regular jobs coming in. We have disposable income. We have access to credit cards; we have access to a line of credit. There are all these things.

At the end of the day, this is a really good program. I'm not taking away from it and I think we need more. But we need to make sure that everybody can avail of it. Rural Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have the same access or a program where they can have similar access. Low-income families, they're our most vulnerable. When we look at nutrition and access to healthy foods, they are also impacted.

Nutrition and recreation activities or sporting events, all of these are important to our health. If we don't look after our children today, they will be our adults that will actually be a burden to the system for health care, for a lot of mental health issues, all of these things. When you look at your access to recreation activities, it actually builds your self-confidence. It builds your physical capability. It also adds to mental health. The thing about it is your ability to participate in these activities has many, many rewards for us. Like I said, it's a great program.

I have to speak a little bit on the gymnasiums in the schools. The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands talked about the school gymnasiums and the fact that, at 3, the schools close and they don't have access to the gymnasiums a lot times – recreation. Also, my fellow Member up there from Bonavista talked about similar issues as well.

There are three communities in my district that has shared access to the school gymnasiums, community access. That's the only access they have to the gymnasiums: Makkovik, Rigolet and Postville. When COVID shut down the gymnasiums in the school, the gymnasium was lost to the whole community. They have not had access since March 2019. In actual fact, the AngajukKâk for Rigolet was on the radio a few

weeks ago talking about the hardship that it has created in her community.

In the community of Makkovik, the students were looking at writing letters and doing petitions because they have not had access to the gym as well. When you have community-shared access, it creates a lot of hardship. In Makkovik, we're fortunate enough to actually have a hockey arena, but we actually don't have the capability to make the ice. It's one of those systems where you actually need it to be cold. They do have the Freon in the floor but it's not the same. The ice went on in January, just before Alert Level 5. I don't even know if anyone got a hockey game in, and there was no access to the gymnasiums, so no activities.

In the community of Rigolet, they have an outdoor rink that's not enclosed. I was up there a couple of weeks ago and it was at the time when they could actually go out – the snow was off the rink. I went up there and everybody was playing ball hockey. There were from age five or six up there watching, all age groups was there. There were youngsters there 14 up to 60 years old: all of them playing ball hockey. They were just so glad to be out, engaging – men, women, everybody.

In my district, everybody plays sports. It doesn't matter what age you are, it's not just a young person's game. We have people up there at our age playing volleyball.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: They've always played it. The good thing about it is, when I look at it, they started and continued on through the years. They've had their children and they've continued to play sports. Their children now are participating with them; they are still continuing to play sports. But I tell you, after a year and a half of nobody playing sports, some of these people will not be able to get back to that level of fitness so that they can continue on.

That is a loss, not only for them but it's a loss for the province, because when you're not regularly active your health suffers. When your health suffers, your ability to do things suffers. So we need to make sure the rest of the province does like they do in my district, you continue to

be active. It is a normal thing, everybody participates regardless of your age and everyone is accepted. It is very important for us to be able to actually look at that.

That being said, I'm not going to continue to go on just for the sake of talking, but one of the things we have to make sure is that all parties here in the House, when we're looking at our health, when we're looking at our physical health, our mental health, our emotional health and we actually put programs in place to promote healthy lifestyles; when we put programs in place to promote wellness in our communities, we make sure that populations don't fall through the cracks.

With this program I do see some people in rural Newfoundland and Labrador falling through the cracks because they can't avail of the tax credit. Also, I look at low-income families and I see the potential for them to fall through the cracks as well. So when we're looking at policies, especially policies that are outlined in our budget, that's put forward for wellness, that we make sure that we address it for everybody.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to spend a few minutes to speak on this bill. I have a lot of the same comments that I just heard from the two previous Members.

First of all, anything you can do to help out and get people active is a great idea and is a great initiative. When you look at sports yourself, you look at people who played sports over the years and how much it helped you in your life and how many friendships you made and the physical part and the medical part where it helps, Mr. Speaker, it's a tremendous help to a lot of people to cut down on our medical costs in the province.

Also, I always found in sports when you get people who are dedicated, the work ethic that you get. When you have to do sprints in the gym

or you have to do some running, Mr. Speaker, it's a commitment that you make that when you do it it's going to help you in whatever career you pursue in life, the work ethic that it will give you.

Any time there's a program like this, which is good for some people and some won't be able to avail of it, of course, Mr. Speaker, I look at the people who will avail of this. Like the people who go cross-country skiing, they're going to go away, most of them, and some won't. But if not, I'll give a suggestion to the minister: If there is some way that you can tie this tax credit into the schools, if you could tie it in some way into the schools, because there are a lot of school programs that can use cross-country skiing and they can use it to buy snowshoes. But they can't use it right now, the way it is, because it has to be an individual tax credit. What you see is you see a lot of people who can partake in their activities but they don't have the equipment somehow and then the families who go outside, the people who can afford it are going cross-country skiing, the 700 people they had last year, they're going to go anyway. If there's some way to get the younger ones who can't afford it, and schools is a primary way.

Another thing is – and this will go with the government and not just the minister itself – the part of physical, there are three or four parts of that. One, it is great to get the exercise. The second part of that is to ensure that you have healthy food to keep you healthy: if I'm going to go out today and I'm going to run five miles, I'll burn off 500 calories. But if I'm going to go eat a bag of chips or drink a soft drink because I can't afford milk, there is not much of a benefit to it.

This is something for the whole government, this is not for the minister herself, this is the part in Newfoundland and Labrador with low-income is that if there was some way that we could help with the healthy food. It is cheaper to pick up a bottle of pop than it is right now to get some milk. If you want to get vegetables, community gardens are a great way to start.

The other thing that I find throughout, and you do it a lot in hospitals but we don't do it enough as a government or as a people, is education on healthy eating and healthy exercise. We do a lot

of work but if there is ever an education program to explain to people the difference, and that goes hand in hand with food prices.

I know, Mr. Speaker, a lot of this here – I'll just give you an example – a lot of kids at school when I was coaching before the pandemic, if they're in the basketball program, you have to pay so much for your uniform, pay so much for your registration, if you have travel there is no mechanism here to get a rebate on that. We know the travel costs, the hotel costs sometimes, we know the cost of registration, the cost of the uniforms, but the students then that participate in the team sports that have to put the money into the school. I don't know, Madam Minister, if there is a way that the school can give individual tax credits somehow for what they put into that because that is a great incentive for people in the schools themselves.

I'll give you a good example, if you're travelling to St. John's from Corner Brook – a team, and you have to put the money in – the parents raise the money, put in the money, there is no tax credit back to the kids. That's one thing I would ask to look at.

I know it was brought up earlier about the – open up the gyms in rural parts of – even in Corner Brook. There are a lot of activities, a lot of places, but when people have to go up and pay \$50, \$60 or \$70 an hour it take its toll on it.

I thank God – and I'll bring this up – there was a few of us here that I remember going through Regina High School. Back then on Fridays and Saturdays the gym was open for us; Regina High School gym was open. We went in there Friday nights and Saturdays. Sundays we had to study; that was part of the deal. We went in and we did that kind of stuff, Mr. Speaker.

Those are the great initiatives that we had with the schools; they were open. That's just one. That would help a lot of kids and a lot of parents in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. If there's some way that we can tie into the school program, that they can open the gymnasium and let kids go in. It has to be supervised, of course. It has to be supervised, but have the kids go in and partake in the nighttime, Saturdays, Sundays and Friday nights, some place to go and keep

them active, if there's any way the government can do that.

There's absolutely no doubt that there are a lot of people – and I say the \$7 million will be used. Then again, I don't know how to express this, but there are some people who can't afford the \$2,000 for the sports. I don't know, Minister, if there's any way you can carve some of that for people for low income that need to participate in sports.

You see it. I know the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port is the same as me: We coach a lot. We've seen a lot of people who can walk in and pay their money and we've seen a lot of kids who can't. We've seen it. That's a reality. Sometimes, other parents chip in and help sell the tickets or help find some way to do it. That's just some suggestions, if there's any way with the program.

When you're out and you see a lot of team sports, when some kid can't afford to pay for the uniform, it's tough. When the kid has to put in the \$50, but you know he's not going to get a tax credit or some way to help out, it's a way to – if you want to incentivize the youth and find some way that you can get them involved, the \$2,000 maximum is a lot of money. When you get back \$175, \$180, there's no doubt that they can go up to that amount. There's absolutely no doubt. If you're in team sports at any school or if you're going to any sports after school, it's hard to get a receipt. That would help a lot with the people themselves.

I'll be supporting this, no problem whatsoever. I think it's a great initiative. I just throw it out there to government that one part of it is the physical part, the second part is the education part and the third part is the food, to make sure people are healthy. That's the third part and that's a tough one because I know myself – and I can look around this room – sometimes when we're just sitting around it's easier to grab a bag of chips than go get an apple or a banana. We know that. Sometimes people can't afford an apple or a banana, they can afford chips. Those are just some initiatives I'm bringing out for government.

With this here, there have been many studies. If you're more physical, if you're active, the

medical cost down the road is decreased. That is just factual. There is absolutely no doubt about that. I know the School Lunch program; I know there are a lot of breakfast programs that a lot of people chip in and help out, which is a great idea.

I'll just close on that. I think it's a great initiative by government. The ideas I'm throwing out are some that I see in reality. I know it can't be done overnight. I know that. I know that it's going to take three or four different departments, Mr. Speaker, to coordinate that and it's going to be tough. It's going to be something we should set a plan out over a number of years.

It's not going to happen over the next six months, a year, two or three years, but it's a number of years that we could set some plan out and stick with the plan, the education plan, the proper food plan and then the exercise and wellness plan. It will pay dividends in the long run. I will be supporting this. I think it's a great initiative that's in the budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome the opportunity to speak to this, this afternoon. I would draw upon my past experiences as a swim coach and my involvement with youth in our community to see the benefits that these activities bring to their lives.

I started swimming when I was old enough to be thrown over the wharf. That's the first lesson that I had. I grew up going through the chain of the swim team and the swim lessons; became the lifeguard, became the pool supervisor and had all these experiences in that avenue. I would trade it for none of my experiences as a child and growing up. I learned a lot of valuable lessons. I learned the value of teamwork, co-operation and how you can rely on your teammates when things go sideways. We had a great time as part of the members of the St. Anthony Dolphins circa 1994.

I spent time as a swimmer and then I spent another seven, eight years as a coach. To see how these activities breathe life into these kids, how they work together and find an identity in being part of a team. The ability for them to show up to practice – honest to goodness, they'd be there at 6 in the morning and I'd just barely have one eye open and they'd be ready to swim. They'd be committed; they'd be dedicated. It certainly was a rewarding experience to be part of that. Then to see how they developed and how their skills improved, how their confidence improved and how they became new leaders for our team, new coaches.

My favourite place to swim was Springdale. We had a great time at the swim meets. To see our young swimmers grow into young leaders and then into lifeguards and then into management at the facility, it certainly was full circle. A lot of those individuals have gone on to careers of service in nursing and in child development. I couldn't be more proud of the team that I had as part of the St. Anthony Dolphins.

To speak to that, I would like to remind people that there are other programs. Swimming was my passion and I'm sure others around could share their experiences in certain other areas. But to know that this government has taken a stand to support those activities and to make that available for families and for individuals who want to participate in these activities and get the benefit for doing so, it speaks to the importance of how we want to reshape and transform how we provide services in this province. I think that is a first step that we can make. There's certainly more to come, more to be made. The long road is filled with small steps, so here we are. I certainly would like to encourage everybody to participate in activities.

Then, putting on my municipalities' hat, to see the impact that these activities have in communities. I think we can all speak to that, how communities rally around their events, around their sport teams and around their recreational activities and facilities. How it becomes a part of their culture and part of your community, I think that's certainly something that's important. As we move forward with plans for how we reshape municipal governance and how those things will apply, I think that this is, again, another piece of that puzzle in making

important changes and allowing residents the ability to participate in things that will hopefully lead to better efficient and effective services in our communities.

So I would like to commend – and, again, new girl, so this was the first round. When we see how this stuff unfolds, to look at the big picture and then to realize that there are so many little stages that make a big impact, I think this is one of these pieces that we can walk away from here knowing that we've made a difference in these communities, in these lives of these residents and that, in the big picture, it is something that we'll be able to take a credit away from.

When we look at how it will impact our communities, I'd like to think that this is the first step in moving to more accessible resource management for our communities in terms of how we can make programs available. I know that there are often questions about that and how we can get accessible programming, certain levels of different physical activity. That is a question that has come up. And certainly something that has come across our department is how we work to make municipalities accessible for all people of different abilities.

So that's an issue that I've discussed before, and I am pleased to say that there are several initiatives and several playgrounds that I've come across that are accessible for different levels of abilities. It is something that I think we can work towards, as part of this program, is making sure that kids, families, students or whoever wants to participate in these activities has that ability.

When we look at the programs that will qualify, we'll have a broad range of avenues that people can express and take part in to make sure that they're taking advantage and getting these physical activities in and getting the benefits of them. I certainly do look forward to how we can move that along in our province. I am proud to be part of this initiative and I think it is a great idea for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is an honour to speak to this bill. As I have discussed around the budget, there are a number of things there that I think are positive, but I am extremely pleased with this one. Now, I think my former colleagues might have said we would have liked to have more money put into it, but I realize there is a tempered approach to everything. I would hope that this would be the start of continuous budgets where we look at, even if we are in a fiscal crunch, the financial benefits after of keeping our society healthy by having them engage in a physical recreation process.

You can't lose when you put it in as a tax incentive, because there is no costing to you if there is no uptake. But if there is a massive uptake there might be a small costing but, at the same time, you see the value from a health perspective and the social inclusion perspective. I do like them and, fortunate enough, in this House over the last more than a decade I have been part of it on both sides, in government and in Opposition, to see budgets that had certain things in it.

I will note – and it has nothing, obviously, to do with this Finance Minister, but one of the initiatives that we had, that we supported in this province that I thought was enormously successful – I can't say I thought; it's still enormously successful. The only unfortunate thing is we're not a partner in it. I say we, that being the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that we used to be a partner in. It really is centred around and focuses on recreation, physical activity from every gamut without having to be too administratively complex for people to be engaged in, and that was the Canadian Tire Jumpstart program.

I say that because we looked at, years ago, when there was discussions around how do we engage more people into recreation, particularly those who may be disadvantaged and may not have an opportunity to be engaged in physical activity programs and services, what do we do to make it happen? I do recall – I was a civil servant at the time – that I got a call from the then Premier's office who said, there's a real good program in St. John's called the REAL Program and I understand you have a little bit of knowledge of

it – which I did at the time – and we think it does great to include physical activity for individuals, particularly young people and families. But it also targets those who may be disadvantaged. Those who would not have a normal opportunity to be engaged. As the premier was the Member for Corner Brook at the time, he wanted to look at doing the same thing out there and partnering either with the city or developing some kind of program.

He attached a budget to our division or asked that we do that and look at it. The amount of money that would have been attached seemed significant but after you hire staff, you get an office, you do printing and all this type thing, there would have been very minimal amount of money to do any programming to really go to the grassroots level where it would have actually benefited people.

I went back to the premier and the Premier's office and I had said – fortunate enough I was the vice-president of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada at the time. I had been in a meeting in Toronto when the Canadian Tire Foundation for Families CEO came and met with the Board of Directors of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and pitched a proposal that they were setting up a separate wing of their Foundation for Families that would be solely around engaging young people, particularly those in disadvantaged areas or those who had some challenges financially in their families to be engaged in sport and fitness.

They pitched the proposal to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada which fit well in with what Boys and Girls Clubs stand for. On a daily basis, there are 250,000 young people go through clubs in this country, of which seven are in this province, and do wonderful work for people.

There was a new Canadian Tire store opening in Mount Pearl and, at the time, I had got invited because of my role as the provincial president of the Boys and Girls Clubs and the connection we had made just in Ottawa. In my conversations with the new CEO of Jumpstart, who they had just hired for Atlantic Canada and who happened to be a young man out of Buchans, Newfoundland, who was living in Nova Scotia, but had taken on this job, and we had a grand conversation.

I had talked about: If I could leverage some money out of government for your program, what would you offer in return? Their whole concept was they would do all of the administration. They would do the community development by setting up nine regional councils, which are made up of the sport and recreation agencies in those regions, on a volunteer basis, and who could actually leverage money for inclusion around recreation, particularly those young people who may not have access to it. Plus, they said: We would match dollar for dollar anything that's put in. So they went away and I thought that was intriguing.

I went back to the Premier's office and said: Look, you give me this amount of money, here's what I can guarantee you will leverage back and I'll make sure one of the sites is in Corner Brook so that the Premier's district also benefited from it, as would a number of other sites. They gave me the ability or, I guess, the responsibility to take it to the next level and negotiate with Jumpstart.

We were the first entity in this country to sign on with the Canadian Tire Foundation for Families under the Jumpstart program as a partner. That partnership developed into over 9,000 young people in this province getting to be part and parcel of recreation and sport activities. And I don't mean just a show-up-for-an-afternoon-hour thing. I mean, where kids to this day are still getting – they're into their sixth or seventh year of minor hockey, they had never played minor hockey before, who are still getting their registration paid because of a financial challenge and are still getting gear taken care of.

The developed partnership that we ended up getting to, to show how important it would be to have young people engaged, was three-fold negotiated things. When a regional council went to negotiate with a particular sports provider, and it could be a hockey school, it could be a dance studio, it could be an archery club or it could be a basketball thing, we went and said: If we sponsor or pay for the registration of a particular individual, we want you to give something; we want you to match it.

So if we had a hockey school that certain kids had been identified that could move to the next level, or kids who wanted to do power skating because they never been skating before or joined figure skating for the first time, for every person that we would pay to that entity, it could be – obviously, most of these clubs are volunteer-wise, or even ones that are private companies, they would match it. The partnerships that we developed as it moved forward, we're not on a one-for-one match now; we're on a one for probably three or four. These companies give back or these agencies give back and know that the vetting process for the Jumpstart program is all done by volunteers who have a background in the particular communities around the need of engaging people in sport and fitness. It was very relevant to what was happening.

We had gotten to a point where Canadian Tire were putting a 10-1 ratio into Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that there was access to recreation for young people here as an incentive. It wasn't a tax incentive, but it was in one way, because at the end of the day people didn't have to spend money they didn't have.

The Canadian Tire Jumpstart would start by saying: If you want to buy equipment for a particular agency – if a Boys and Girls Club, for example, or a cadet corps wanted to get their members involved in recreation and wanted to buy a treadmill, Canadian Tire would give them a discount. That went for the first year. By the second year, it was Canadian Tire will give it to you at cost. If Canadian Tire's treadmill was \$700 but their cost was \$450, you got it for that. By the third year, it was if this agency made an application for it, the treadmill was given for free, not counting all the other administrative parts that they would pay for the organization of these councils.

Government, at the end of it, before it was all said and done, had managed to leverage \$375,000 out of the youth services branch to give to Jumpstart. Three hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars a year was getting us back, at one point, \$6.1 million in direct or indirect recreation-inclusive services for young people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It was an amazing partnership that was developed. It was acknowledged nationally that

this was a benefit to everybody. So much so that now every other jurisdiction, every province – the federal government are in for substantial amounts of money. Every sports agency, every big entity here are providers and supporters of the Jumpstart, and we see it everywhere – the TV commercials. You don't go in a Canadian Tire and not see some emblem there from Jumpstart and not understand what that means to young people in this country.

It's unfortunate and it killed me in 2016 when I saw in the budget the slash. Of all the things that could've been done, I thought that was the most disheartening. I spoke to it then. I thought it was somebody who had made a decision who had no understanding of the needs of people who would like to be engaged in recreation and sport, but couldn't afford it. The benefit from a partnership, from a business – if you did nothing but you did the business analysis, what a way to invest your money. I think, as I said it at the time, the 2016 budget was nothing but a calculator budget. It was just a cut: take a percentage off, cut it all across the board. That was disheartening.

I say that in connection here that at least I have a spark of hope now that this administration now sees the benefits of engaging people in the sport and recreation. I'm not quite sure the only avenue is the tax break here but I see that as one of them. I think there are a number of other ones that should be engaged in how this is done.

I do want to acknowledge the fact those volunteer agencies are still out there. Those volunteer sports groups – and don't forget, they're also made up of social workers and educators who help assess the application process to ensure that it's done fairly. Priorities are given to those who, first, would not have normal access. Then, if they're successful in the regions – and some of the regions actually do some of their own fundraising to be able to double up.

When you have an agency that is guaranteeing to match what you fundraise, or double it or triple it or quadruple it in some cases, why wouldn't you be incentivized to do more for it and to raise more of it? You'd see more kids and more families being able to be engaged in that process. Keep in mind that in a region, if they're

spending money, it's all going back in the same pot. If you now get extra hours in your arena, if it is in St. Anthony, for example, well, that keeps the arena afloat for those kids and families who can't afford it themselves also. So everybody benefits when you do that. It makes sure the municipalities' expenses are minimal because you're maximizing the use of that facility. It has been a very positive move forward.

I'm hoping when the time is right, maybe I'll sit down with the Minister of Finance and have a chat and say, you know what, there are additional monies – there is always some slippage in certain grants in other departments that could be channelled. I would tell you now, Martha Billes, who is 93 years old and who is the owner of Canadian Tire, would be more than engaged to accept support again.

I'll tell this story and I tell it with pure respect because it was the way it was done in respect. In 2009, Canadian Tire, to celebrate the whole Canadian Tire family foundation – I think it was the 20th anniversary of the family foundation – had a major gathering at their building. They have a 50-story building on Yonge Street in Toronto. I got the privilege of being flown up at their expense and put up and invited to this big gala. The gala at the time had everybody: the CEO of Nike Canada, the CEO of Canstar and the CEO of Weber – the CEO of every company that you could think of because they were partners in this. They were bought in to the foundation and to Jumpstart – and the value.

I wasn't quite sure why we were invited there – I'll take a free trip anywhere, let alone if it gets to Toronto, where I lived for a period of time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: I'm a civil servant; I'm smart enough to know that. At the end of the day, we were called. It was a little above, I'd say, my pay grade or anything else, the people who were there, but I did enjoy and had some good conversations. I do remember her getting up and – you have to give credit to this lady now; she is the majority shareholder of Canadian Tire. Her father and uncle started Canadian Tire in 1922, so she has been around the business. She bought back shares that were sold over the years because she is a true-blue Canadian. She

believes in this country. She believes in giving back to the communities.

She got up and one of the conversations – she was talking, she’s introducing all these CEOs of this and all this and she said: I need to know our friends. She said this with pure respect – whether or not people like it or not – my Newfie friend, Mr. Brazil, where is he? I need to acknowledge him.

I put up my hand and she said I need you to come up here; I need you to come up on these stairs. So I came up and she said we’re giving ye, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the first, as it was called, Jumpstart partnership award for your commitment to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the commitment to the youth of Newfoundland and Labrador. I thought that was such a telling story of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: – how we in this province can be trend leaders. We don’t have to follow anybody else. We can start the trend. We took a chance on the Canadian Tire foundation and the Jumpstart, which was nothing when it started; nobody knew what it was. People thought it would be another corporate ploy to pat themselves on the back and raise money at somebody else’s expense.

They give a big cheque – as we see from some corporations that I refuse to give five cents to, when we go into their store they say, do you want to donate to a charity? They present a big cheque as if this corporation did a wonderful job and there’s not five cents being offered by them to this charity as such. I pick and choose, like I think a lot of us do, where we think the best bang for the dollar that we’re going to donate to organizations is. I wholeheartedly saw the value in this; I wholeheartedly see the value in this piece of legislation. I wholeheartedly will be supporting it, as will my colleagues, particularly us in the PC caucus, will be supporting it.

I do encourage the minister and some of the other departments to think outside the box. Thinking outside the box right now might be going back to the way we thought a number of years ago and supporting some of the programs

and services and developing partnerships that we gain immensely from and get back tenfold what we invest because the process and the infrastructures are already in place and the mechanism to get a better return on it.

What I say here is we need to use all of our partners, when it comes to social inclusion and recreation and when it comes to physical fitness, because our society has to be based on – if we’re mentally fit, if we’re physically fit, we’re going to be economically fit, because people are going to be able to use their ingenuity to make sure our province moves forward.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you I will be voting for this. I’m glad to see this positive thing in this budget.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: My colleague said talk about the election. It’s not a money bill. I’ll be talking about that all night tonight though.

Mr. Speaker, I’m glad to get an opportunity to speak to this bill. Of course, this here is about the tax credit for sports and fitness and so on. Obviously, I think every Member who has spoken thus far has indicated that they’re going to support it and that they feel it’s a good thing. I will obviously support it as well.

I know we have a very active community, certainly, in Mount Pearl and in Southlands. We have a huge sporting organization. Mount Pearl Sport Alliance is, I think, the largest sporting organization in Newfoundland – probably one of the largest ones, certainly in Atlantic Canada, for sure that brings together a whole host of groups and organizations.

We have Mount Pearl minor hockey. We have Mount Pearl Soccer Association. We have Mount Pearl baseball. We have tennis. We have

Pearlgate Track and Field. We have the Mount Pearl Marlins, which are swimming. We have ice-skating. You name it. There are associate members – Kenpo Karate and so on, Pat Cochrane and them. So there are huge opportunities for sure for sport in Mount Pearl.

The other thing that we have certainly in Mount Pearl is the recreational infrastructure. We have tremendous recreational infrastructure, whether it be the Pearlgate Track and Field, which was put there many years ago; it's in need of a bit of an upgrade now, but it was put there many years ago. I would give credit to former MHA for Mount Pearl South at the time, Neil Windsor, for getting that there. Neil did an awful lot for Mount Pearl, there's no doubt about it, but anyway.

Of course, we have the Glacier, we have the Summit Centre and we have numerous soccer fields throughout the city. Certainly, one of them at Team Gushue is artificial turf. We also have baseball fields. We have softball fields. We have men's softball and lady's softball. So that's just in the team sports and so on.

In addition to that, of course, we have tremendous walking trails and parks and so on for more leisurely exercise and fitness. There is no doubt that it's a very active community and, as I said, so is the Southlands part as well. There are a lot of people that do avail of the gym, for example, at the Summit Centre and there are people, of course, who go to GoodLife as well.

I have no doubt in my mind that there will be many people in my district, there will be many constituents of mine and there will be many constituents of my colleague in Mount Pearl North that will take advantage of this tax break. When we're in tough times and the cost of everything is going up, of course, not just in taxation, but taxes get passed along. We know the price of groceries, fuel and everything else, so any time there is an opportunity for residents to get a break on something, I think it's going to be welcomed. I'm sure that the people I represent would want me to support this particular initiative, and I will support this initiative, Mr. Speaker.

That said, though, I want to sort of piggyback on what my colleague from Humber - Bay of

Islands talked about, because it was something I was going to talk about as well but he sort of beat me to the punch. A little pun there; he was a boxer. Anyway, ba-dum tsh.

The fact that while this tax credit is a good thing for anybody who can afford to pay that money upfront; it's a good thing for anyone who can afford to pay that money upfront, to pay that money to the gym, to pay that money for soccer registration, for hockey because, I mean, we know sports are very, very expensive, it's not just the registration.

If you take hockey alone, my God, when I played hockey many years ago, I guess you could get all of your equipment, your skates and everything for, I don't know, a couple hundred dollars or whatever. Now, you're probably paying – I don't know what the going rate is these days, but I'd say a pair of skates is probably, what, a thousand dollars? There are people paying a thousands dollars for a pair of skates. There are people paying a couple of a hundred dollars or more for a hockey stick. I remember going down to the sport shop and picking up a hockey stick, I think, for \$10 or \$20 at the most.

AN HON. MEMBER: Did you score any goals?

P. LANE: I scored a few, a few. But I was –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Yeah. I remember every one of them. That's right, I remember every one of them.

Anyway, I digress. The point is, though, the cost to be involved in sport is very, very expensive. I know that the groups and the organizations, the sporting groups, they do try to keep the cost down to a reasonable level. They try to keep it as low as they can. I know they do in Mount Pearl and I'm sure they do throughout the province but there is still a cost to running the programs. If we're talking about hockey, they also have to pay for ice time and stuff like that. As I said, equipment in itself is a lot of money.

Providing this opportunity for people to get this tax break and so on, to get a little bit of that money back on this investment – I think

everyone agrees this is an investment. As I said, it's a good thing. It will have a positive impact on a lot of people in my district. A lot of people will take advantage of it. They will welcome it. They would want me to support it and I support it.

As I was about to say before I went off track, as the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands said, there are also a lot of families out there that a tax break is no good to them because they can't afford to pay for the sport or for the equipment or so on upfront to begin with. A tax break is only good for someone who can afford it and then come income tax time, you get your little tax break. What about the families who are struggling, families who are at or below or just above the poverty line, how do they benefit? How do their children benefit?

This is a good thing, but I think more has to be done to look at those families on the lower income threshold, to look at those families and say what can we do to make sure that any child who wants to play sports is able to play sports.

Now, I'm well aware of the Canadian Tire Jumpstart program. It's a wonderful program. I've been around it, involved with it and so on over the years as MHA and on city council. I have a great working relationship with the Mount Pearl Sport Alliance. I'm well up on it and what they do. It's a good program. But I think more has to be done and more support has to be given to ensure that all children have the opportunity to play sports. No child should be left behind.

Again, I'm just looking at the Mount Pearl system. I'm assuming other sports fraternities across the province would operate in a similar manner. I know there are a number of sports, for example, in Mount Pearl – because I've had a couple – where somebody from one of the sports would say: Paul, listen, if you know of a child who wants to play in this particular sport and they can't afford their registration, then you send them my way and we'll make sure they get to play. We're not going to deny them the opportunity, say, to play soccer, for example – I'll just use an example – because that family can't afford it. If Jumpstart or these programs can assist, great. If Jumpstart and these programs

can't assist for whatever reason, then we'll make sure the child is looked after.

I know that happens. I'm sure it happens in other sports. I know it happens in other organizations that are not even sports, because I've seen that same type of approach, whether it would be with Brownies and Girl Guides and Scouts, cadets, and so on. I've had that similar experience where the groups have said: Listen, if a child wants to be involved, we'll make it happen, one way or another.

That's all great. I'm just saying, Mr. Speaker, that as we're doing this program, we also have to look at the most disadvantaged as well and make sure that we can do something to make sure their children and those families are also looked after.

The other part, as my colleague and I think the Leader of the Official Opposition talked about as well, is about the healthy eating side and access to healthy food and so on. It's one thing to have sports and recreation and so on, but it's no point in doing that if it's going to be counteracted by a whole bunch of unhealthy eating because families cannot afford to eat healthy. That's another issue, obviously.

Thank God for organizations like Saint Vincent de Paul. Thank God for them. They're angels. They really are. They're doing tremendous work. I know they're doing tremendous work in my community. We have a Saint Vincent de Paul Society at St. Peter's Parish. We have one located in Mount Pearl North over Mary Queen of the World. We also have the Salvation Army on Ashford Drive. They're all doing great work, but it's not filling that gap.

We have to find a way to make sure that children in particular – everybody, really, but certainly children, too – that there's an ability for children to also be able to have access to healthy foods. That has to be part of the equation, somehow, someday. Maybe the community gardens thing has to be expanded.

I mean, I thought about this one time. I don't know why there is not some social enterprise, as an example. Why can we not have a social enterprise where the government hands over – because they have been handing over a lot of

agricultural land, which is good. Why can't we hand over some agricultural land and have a social enterprise where we're actually employing people, perhaps who have challenges with getting employment and so on, and have them farm the land and give the food away to the food bank for free so then the food bank actually has fresh vegetables and stuff?

Maybe it can be run by Saint Vincent's – I'm not saying they'd want to go down that road, but maybe there could be a connection to Saint Vincent de Paul or the food bank or so on that somebody is actually growing it and then that produce is going directly to the food banks.

If we have this group that go hunting moose now and getting capelin and all that and they're giving the food to the food banks – Barry Fordham and that group, which I think is a fantastic idea – I can't see why we cannot be doing something similar when it comes to fresh produce. Like I say, what an opportunity for a great social enterprise to actually employ some people and grow crops and provide those crops to the food banks in order for people who depend on the food banks to have access to some fresh vegetables and so on.

Those are the type of things – I'm not saying that model is necessarily the way to go or is going to work, but we have to start thinking outside the box a ways. One thing we got is we got lots of land. One thing we have here in Newfoundland is a lots of undeveloped land. There are opportunities to utilize that. It doesn't all have to be for commercial purposes.

Somehow we look at everything, all of our assets, everything we got, and all we continue to be looking at are using it for commercial purposes, so somebody can make money and so on. I'm not against that either because we need employment, we need economic development and we need all those things. But why can we not also use some of our resources to be able to provide, in this case through agricultural land, healthy food to food banks?

Why can we not have a cod quota, for example? Why can there not be a cod quota that somebody can go out and catch a whole bunch of cod and that goes directly to the food bank? I think the FFAW got their own cod quota to help pay for

their expenses and what they're doing. Why can we not do similar? Why can't we have a cod quota through Ottawa, say we want a cod quota that the cod gets caught and it belongs to food banks? It's not going to a processor, per se, but it's going to the food banks. They benefit from it. So then people can have fish, which is a great protein source.

These are the kind of things that I think we have to start thinking outside the box a little more about ways that we can provide that healthy food to people who, otherwise, will never be able to obtain it. I think that goes hand in hand with this thing we're doing today. This is one piece. This is one piece of the puzzle, there's no doubt. It's beneficial and no one is going to knock it. But the reality of it is that a lot of the people who are going to take advantage of this tax credit tomorrow, or next year I should say, are people who already have gym memberships anyway. People who already have their kids in sports anyway.

They'll take advantage of it. If the government is going to give them an opportunity to save some money, they're going to take it. But I don't know that it's going to do a lot for people who can't afford to have their kids in sports today. People who can't afford to join the gym today. People who can't afford healthy food today. This is not going to do anything to help them. I don't think it is. It's going to do very little.

I'm not saying that it won't do any good for anybody. I'm just trying to point out that most people who are going to take advantage of this are already availing of these programs anyway. It's just going to be a little bit of money back, a little bit of an incentive, thank you very much, government. That's what it's going to be. It's not going to get to the root of the problem of people and families who can't afford sports, who can't afford healthy food, can't afford those things.

I think there needs to be more focus on that segment of the society that can't afford it. I guess that's the point that I want to make. I think it was the point that my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands made; that was part of the points he made. I think the Leader of the Official Opposition sort of raised those points as well. What about the people who can afford it least?

That's the question. What about the people who can afford it least?

I would certainly encourage the government and I would encourage the Minister of Finance— and I give her credit; I see that she has been over there listening and nodding her head as she always does. I give her credit. I'm sure she is taking all this into account and I do appreciate that. Like I say, Mr. Speaker, I will support this bill on its own merits because, obviously, it's something that the people I represent will take advantage of and will be happy with.

We cannot forget the people who can't afford any of this to begin with. We can't afford people who are living, as I said earlier, on just above or below the poverty line. Those are the people that we really need to target with programs to achieve the goals, which they're intended for.

The goal of this tax credit, as I understand it, is to make people healthier and to encourage the population to be healthier; therefore, that's going to hopefully result in lowered health care costs. That's the intent. Again, I would suggest that the people that get targeted with this initiative are probably people who already are doing what they need to do, or have the ability to do what they need to do and they've just decided they're not going to do it. It's not doing anything to target the people who would like to be able to do it, but because of their financial situation cannot.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I will support the bill.

Thank you.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to pick up on my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands – especially when he talked about helping out organizations like Saint Vincent de Paul – I want to point out a program that's sort of happening already. I don't know if he's aware or if people are aware of Sharing the Harvest NL. It was a project started by Mr. Barry Fordham; he's with the Newfoundland Outdoor Heritage Coalition. One of the things they're looking at is the whole notion of donating moose

meat and game to food banks so that they could distribute it.

It has caught on, and the food banks and the Community Food Sharing Association – this is something that is certainly very popular and received in a very positive way. So it is possible to do that. That's being done. I agree that maybe there are ways to extend this in other areas. Yes, I will support this bill, but my key issue here is still – I want to pick up on the whole issue of affordability and taxes.

If I remember correctly – and I apologize to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety if I've misquoted him, but I think during Estimates, one of the figures that came up was it costs over \$130,000 per annum to house an inmate at Her Majesty's Penitentiary. Think about that. That's the amount of money per person per year.

I told you this story before about Brother Jim McSheffrey when he was trying to set up a community centre, I think, down in the east end. One of the things he said: Look, what I can do with \$130,000, give me that. You can probably divert people from the correctional facilities. In many ways, I see any form of sport activity along this line. Not only is it about encouraging positive behaviour, positive trends, positive attitudes, it's about maybe, if nothing else, diverting people from one lifestyle into a more positive lifestyle.

I'm not going to belabour it, but I will echo the concerns that my colleagues from Mount Pearl - Southlands and Torngat Mountains raised about the whole notion of affordability as to who the program is going to target. If you can already afford to do that, you're probably going to do it anyway. It is nice to get a tax credit, no doubt about it, but those with the income are more likely to lead a healthier lifestyle in many ways to begin with. What I would like to see as we move forward is that we look for ways to extend this so that all families are included, so that they don't have to wait for the tax credit, that it's not dependent and that it's subsidized in some way, shape or form.

You might remember that back over a year ago I gave a Member's statement on the Avalon Minor Hockey Association; they had just purchased Feildian Gardens. One of the things

that they were trying to do was to lower the fees across the board so that it would be more inclusive. Anyone who has had anyone in hockey – and I'm not one of them; I'm about as coordinated as a one-legged stool on the ice, it's as simple as that – it can be a very expensive proposition, tied up with fundraising, selling tickets and everything else. I think you make it affordable for as many so that there is no stigma attached to it as to who gets the charity case or who gets the charity equipment and so on and so forth. There are ways of doing this.

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands referenced the fact of schools. I think there is an element there that there are some possibilities here not only for schools, but for other organizations who are engaged with this, so that they're recording the best, in many cases, situation to determine who could use the support.

It's interesting with the schools. When I was at Holy Heart and any other school, field trips, overnights and weekend trips for teams were challenging at the best, Mr. Speaker. I do remember at Holy Heart one of the things that we did was the highlanders at Gros Morne yearly expeditions. It was basically a science – it took all the science students and they brought them out to Gros Morne. We stayed at Killdevil Lodge. They got to see the people in the field doing the electrofishing, the research, the tracking and everything else. I, as the English teacher there, was along for the literary and artistic liaison consultant position, simple as that, but it was absolutely fascinating to see some of the research.

One of the reasons it became difficult, like in many cases, is that the price kept going up of just getting students out to the park. It was a fantastic learning experience. The students got to see parts of the province, Mr. Speaker, they would not normally have seen before. It was all around a very good way, a positive way, to enrich the curriculum.

When it comes to making things more affordable, if nothing else even at the school level, because it's the school level – hop on a basketball team or a soccer team, it's easy enough. The school, in this situation, can indeed make it easier on families. If we're going to look

at ways of making healthy living activities more affordable, let's look at the schools.

Secondly, the other part of it is – I see that it talks about here, “support recreation, physical activity, athlete and sport development, as well as encourage active healthy lifestyles” I'm assuming then, that there is an opportunity here for anything in terms of whether it's team sport or other. Now, I never had a particularly skillful set of abilities in teams sport, but I did love cycling, skiing and so on and so forth.

I know that when I was in high school it was very much focused on team sports. By the time I was teaching, of course, we had programs such as Healthy Living that looked at everything from outdoor activities, to camping – not necessarily track and field, but all of those things. Because many people were not always going to carry on in team sports, whether it's hockey, soccer or baseball, but you still wanted them to be engaged in healthy activities and a healthy lifestyle.

I would hope, then, if it's not there already that this is not just simply a tax credit for being a part of a soccer club, a swim team, a swim club or anything like that. That if a person decides, do you know what? I'm getting into cycling this year, that there's a tax credit to put towards that if it comes down to it. But, again, going back to the families who are probably looking to purchase that, that there's an opportunity that they have those opportunities at hand as well.

Really, Mr. Speaker, and I'll clue up there in a half minute or so, this is my issue with regard to the tax on sugar-sweetened drinks. No problem with it as long as what it's going to be redirected towards. Maybe if we're thinking about applying a tax like that to other foods that are sugar sweetened or are high in calories and low in nutrients, that maybe we start looking at: Well, how do we take that money and reinvest it into families that may not be able to take advantage of the tax credit so that they have those opportunities as well?

Again, to me, paying taxes in many ways is the price I pay for the privilege of living in this society, in this country, in this province and in this city.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

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

I'm not going to take the entire 20 minutes, but I did want to weigh in with a couple of thoughts in relation to and following up on the other speakers to this important move, important bill.

First of all, I compliment the government on this. I think that the last 15 months of this pandemic has really stalled a lot of movement. I'm thinking it's going to do much like the home renovation initiative did, which was really stimulate that situation, the economy. I think this one will actually get us off those couches and off those chairs and get us out there moving again, and I look forward to it.

There are challenges of course and, as some have said, some that can't afford it but we're going to do it anyway. I do hope that as many folks as possible, especially those who potentially couldn't afford to avail, now can see their way forward in finding it.

What I wanted to do was just provide a little bit of levity in a couple of stories. I'm sure there are a few golfers in the room and I just wanted to – I could not pass up an opportunity, the Amaruk Golf and Sports Club is celebrating its 50th year in operation this summer. It's quite a club, the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair was with me just recently and I have had others of you who have been in the area, I have managed to drag you over to show you. It is a real showpiece for what can happen in the guise of a pandemic, because the club was really in bad shape. The clubhouse itself was about to be condemned and we all took it upon ourselves, under the leadership of a gentleman of the name of Rodney Roberts –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I can't hear the speaker.

P. TRIMPER: – to go at that building. We have a beautiful newly renovated clubhouse and we have doubled our membership and so on. But a little story for some of you who know golf history and Goose Bay's role, of course, in transatlantic traffic.

The club was started by a guy by the name of Ernie Funston in 1971. He was frustrated because the 13,000 to 14,000 Americans who were at the base at the time wouldn't allow the civilians to play golf. So Ernie grabbed his buddies together and they went over to the MOT area and they started hacking out a golf course. That was in 1971, they had three holes made by that time, and over the years they have developed what has become a very nice facility.

Through the mid-70s, gentlemen such as Jack Nicklaus – Mr. Nicklaus in particular – used to stop into Goose Bay, refuel, on his way to the Open – the British Open – or other tournaments overseas and some of the members found out that Mr. Nicklaus was going through the airport so they thought, here is an opportunity to meet a pretty interesting guy. So they sent him – on behalf of the Amaruk Golf and Sports Club – an honorary membership so that the next time when Jack was in town getting his plane fuelled up he wouldn't feel inhibited to come over and we'd give him a free round at the golf club.

So they sent him this membership saying: Jack, just to let you know, you are an honorary member, you are welcome anytime. He wrote back, and we have the letter in the clubhouse, and he says: Gentlemen, great to know that I have fans up there in Labrador. I consider myself a very proud club member of the Amaruk Golf and Sports Club. So we all thought that was pretty cool.

A year or so later, it was 1978 actually, Jack won the Open again for the third time. So the executive got together and they sent Mr. Nicklaus another letter and it said something like: Dear Jack, congratulations on your win. Good to see a local club member doing something with himself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. TRIMPER: We never heard back on that letter.

Anyway, I had to tell the story. It's a great little facility. On Monday, by the way, we are celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day with a special golf tournament. It's been embraced by everybody across Labrador. Even though we have 300,000 square kilometres and we pursue all matters – everything from dog sledding, snowmobiling, fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, canoeing – there's a variety. A lot of people are taking up what's relatively new for the culture of Labrador, and that is this game of golf.

I also just want to mention a few other sports and very important sports organizations. I can tell you one that I'm missing a lot, and I think most of us who are very blessed to have a Special Olympics team in your district, and that's the Howling Huskies based in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. I can tell you there are a lot of great people that I miss dearly. We are talking by social media, but for a lot of reasons – as we all know – we've not been able to have those together meets with them. I'm looking forward to seeing those amazing athletes out there joining us.

We've just decided to postpone the Labrador Winter Games. It's every three years. What a way to showcase all those winter sports in Labrador – and I've been a big part of it. But we have to put it off until we get a bit more certainty into our life.

A few other key things that are going on. Hockey is king in Labrador, and I'm very glad to see and congratulate Mr. Arnold Kelly on just being appointed in his senior role now at the provincial level for minor hockey. He's a friend and a neighbour in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. I'm glad to see Arnold make it to this level.

D. BRAZIL: He's a CBSer.

P. TRIMPER: Is he? And a Goose Bay boy we think of him as well. So it's good to see those people fitting in all across the province.

One that I started years ago with some other colleagues is the Great Labrador Canoe Race. We're probably going to have to postpone that again this year. But this captures on the role the canoe has played in the development and exploration – and even before Europeans came

along – of Labrador. So that great race is usually the first weekend or so in August. We have to put that off.

Many other things are going ahead. Probably the greatest thing that I've been able to play a role in, and many other people in this Legislature, that is in our new YMCA. It's about a \$31 million building. It's about to be opened for the public. I've been inside and seen it. I had a tour there with a previous premier, I guess that would've been – yeah, it was last year. We went in with some of the members of the swim team. We have a pool in Goose Bay that's now basically condemned; it's not even in operation. But for the last several years, swimmers at that Melville Mantas swim team have had to swim and then watch for titles falling out of the ceiling.

When I watched them walk into that building last July, August and watched the tears on the faces of some of the coaches and the athletes, it's great to be able to see and be a part of delivering the quality facilities.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, will also do that. I think we'll learn a lot from it and I'm hoping we can all find a way to support future initiatives to get this entire province active.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers if the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board speaks now, she will close debate.

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

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

Thank you for a very interesting afternoon of debating and discussing this particular bill. I appreciate everyone's enthusiasm, especially for the Physical Activity Tax Credit. We didn't really focus on the Dividend Tax Credit, but that is perfunctory and follows in line with the personal income tax changes we recently voted on.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, I was particularly appreciative of all of the different concepts and ideas for future development of the program and how we can actually make this even bigger and broader as we move forward. I think many people said this is a good start, but there are other things to be done.

Allow me to just mention a couple of things and I want to make sure I try and address a few of the comments. A number of people of talked about – and I particularly remember the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands mentioned about helping schools and helping to fund equipment in schools. There is a Community Healthy Living Fund that helps to support programs within schools. So I mention it to Members of the House because I think it's an important program and there may be opportunities under the Community Healthy Living program. There's also \$6.3 million in the budget for recreation, athletic and sport development and I think that's another particular fund.

Many people talked about food insecurity and supports for low income. I will say you'll note in the budget a million dollars for the School Lunch program and also that we will be updating the Poverty Reduction program and doing more in that area. The Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development has been listening attentively all day as well.

I will also say to Members that there are a couple of important points I wanted to make around this issue. One is that this is a refundable tax credit, not a non-refundable. Let me try and make this a little bit easier to understand. A refundable tax credit is actually there is cash in hand here. So it can provide some financial assistance coming out of your tax return; whereas a non-refundable tax credit only reduces your tax payable to zero. This is a refundable versus a non-refundable, just for those who might be considering making sure they get some dollar value in the rebate back. I think it's important and I'm glad the Children, Seniors and Social Development Minister is here to hear some of the concerns around lower income and how we have to maybe adapt and adjust as we move forward on this program.

I also wanted to note a couple of people did speak about making sure this is a broad program

and making sure that we capture as much as possible people all around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I will remind Members that this is also captured online. If you are in a remote part of the province and perhaps there is no particular program that may be available, you can do an online yoga or jiu-jitsu. I happen to do boot camp online, so I know that that's available and that's eligible as you receive a tax credit.

I will also say that in some places and I think the Member for Torngat Mountains talked about how in her community people get together for volleyball. If they do rent the school gymnasium that as long as they have a receipt for the school gymnasium, that's eligible. You could have people coming together and playing volleyball. If they have a receipt from the gymnasium, the rental of the gymnasium, that's also eligible.

We're tried to make it as broad and responsive as possible, because I think this is an important message to the people of the province that we're encouraging physical activity. Part of the direction of this government is to improve our health and our health outcomes and healthy living. We want to be one of the healthiest provinces in the country by the time 2030 comes around and this is one of the ways.

We'll continue in this vein because I, like everyone, like many, many in this room have been focused on sports my entire life. Everything from rowing to basketball to volleyball to field hockey, you name it, and know the benefits of being part of team sports, know the benefits of being physically fit and physically active. I think it's essential for a good, long life.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude debate, thank everyone for their interventions and their discussions and look forward to answering any questions as we move forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 15 now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

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

When shall the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole?

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 15)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole and consider Bill 15.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I should now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider said bill.

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.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 15, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2.

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

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 and 3.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 and 3 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 and 3 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant-Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 15 without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 15.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, Chair of Committees.

B. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 15 without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 15 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, Bill 13.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank everyone for their time and attention today. I know we've had a long day of budget implementation bills, really, and discussions. I know it was a late night last night with Supply and loans.

This particular bill, Bill 13, is to give effect to the tobacco tax increases that were outlined in the budget. What we are proposing that effective – pardon me for a moment.

SPEAKER: Sure.

S. COADY: My apologies. Apparently, I have to put us into Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider certain resolutions on a bill relating to tobacco tax, Bill 13.

SPEAKER: The motion is that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are now debating the related resolution and Bill 13.

Resolution

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

“That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on tobacco.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

S. COADY: Okay, let's try this again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This bill, Bill 13, is to put into effect the tobacco tax increases that were outlined in the budget. Effective June 1, 2021, the tobacco tax rate for cigarettes will increase to 32.5 cents per cigarette, an increase of three cents per cigarette. The tax rate on tobacco, other than cigarettes or cigars, will also increase from 50 cents per gram to 56 cents per gram, which is an increase of six cents.

Of course, Mr. Chair, I will point out and note that Labrador Border Zones Rebate provides a reduced rate of tax for cigarettes and fine-cut tobacco in Labrador City, Wabush and Southern Labrador from the border of the Province of Quebec to and including the community of Red Bay. The reduced rates are provided by way of a rebate to the retailer to adjust for lower tax rates in Quebec and to discourage cross-border shopping. This has been going on for quite some time, Mr. Chair. To offset the tobacco tax increase in the Labrador border zones, we are also increasing the rebate by the equivalent amount.

Annual revenue of this tax change is up to approximately \$13 million. That is estimated. This increase puts our province one of the highest in the country for cigarettes and for fine cut tobacco. British Columbia is increasing their rate to 39 cents per gram – from 39 cents per gram to 65 cents per gram effective July 1. They are a step ahead of us, I believe, Mr. Chair, but that's coming into effect in British Columbia on July 1.

This increase is introduced to achieve revenue and health policy objectives of the province. We all would like to not collect this tax, actually. It is an addiction, Mr. Chair, we recognize that it's an addiction. We offer supports to those that wish to stop smoking. There are multitudes of

programs offered and we put millions of dollars into programs a year to try to encourage people to stop smoking and for other programs of assistance for those to stop their smoking habit.

Chronic diseases impact the health of the population as well as the sustainability of the health care system. Over half of Newfoundland and Labrador residents aged 12 years and above have at least one chronic disease. Many people live with more than one, Mr. Chair. We're really focused as a government on trying to improve the health of our population. We've just spent the afternoon debating the physical activity tax rebate. We know that we continue to put taxes on cigarettes. We continue to offer programming to help those who wish to stop, to stop, Mr. Chair. We've set a goal, Mr. Chair, of being one of the healthiest provinces in Canada by 2030. We're going to continue to put efforts towards this. By 2031, I said 2030.

The increase in tobacco builds on the actions we've taken to create healthier communities and to transform our health care system. I know this can be difficult on people when taxes increase on smoking products. If there's anything that we can do to assist them, in stopping smoking, there are multitudes of programs. The HealthLine is available to them and we encourage them to do that.

On that note, Mr. Chair, I will ask my colleagues to support this bill and support, I guess, a goal towards healthier people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you for this opportunity.

CHAIR: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before getting into Bill 13, I'd just like to reflect upon 14 and 15, if I may, and add a few points before getting into the current bill.

Bill 14, which we had mentioned, somethings I think – the theme of the budget was bold

decisions. I realize and agree that we need to be bold in our decisions and that's what we ought to aim for and where we need to be, whether it be with the fishery or the tourism. If they are \$1 billion industries, bold decisions and a bold strategy would be to grow those so that they quadruple. Instead of bringing in \$1 billion, we've got a goal through this strategy and this plan that we're going to bring in \$3 billion each: fishery and – now, how you would do that, that would be a good conversation that we would have and I am sure we would have a good debate on what steps we could do to grow in those industries.

My hon. colleague raised – when he was talking about the medical school and as applications to medical school went out. One of the first engagements I had as an MHA, back in 2019, was at a rural medical symposium at The Garrick Theatre in Bonavista in 2019. When I attended there were between 30 and 35 medical students that were there. Every one of them spoke well, carried themselves well and every one of them was from rural Newfoundland. I thought, wow, that is amazing.

So when our medical school turns out such product, we don't take any exception or we don't challenge that. When MUN turns out the calibre of teachers that I know, that I have had the benefit to work with, we have a lot to celebrate in Newfoundland and Labrador – that we have a lot to feel proud of.

But one thing that stands out in my mind in a presentation that I had with the Medical Association is that we retain 7 per cent of our medical graduate. Now, if I'm wrong, wonderful, as long as we retain a greater percentage than 7 per cent. But if we invest \$56 million a year into our medical school with a yield of seven – \$56 million a year?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: Okay.

Well, anyway, with a yield of 7 per cent, that's not a good yield. So we can talk about the quality we have, but we need to look at the investment and what we can do to tweak it to make sure that that 7 per cent turns into 17, 27 or 37, so that we can have some family

physicians in the District of Bonavista, which we seem to be always struggling with. No secret there that we've always had a revolving door and we don't have many to stay because I think the workload is so intense and high that that's problematic.

Moving on to Bill 15. I love the Physical Activity Tax Credit and it's good, but I don't think we need to get really, extremely excited about it because every time we do throw out something that incentivizes someone to become healthy and active, it's a good thing.

But I think my hon. colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands might have stated he wasn't too sure how many new entrances into the recreation activities that we're going to have as a result of that. It would be nice for the department to try to find out that data. If we invest into the tax credit, let's find out what difference it made. Did it grow the amount of participants and entrances into the physical activity? That would be a nice piece of data to know for future investments, because if it does, maybe in next year's budget we'll bump it up to an even greater amount because it borne fruit.

The other thing that I'd like to mention is the schools, and I celebrate the fact that we would become the healthiest province in Canada by 2031, as the minister had said. I think that is a commendable goal. Currently, I think we're probably in last place, but our desire in one decade is to get to the fittest and the most active in Canada, and that's wonderful. The only thing I would say is it can't happen and will not happen with the Physical Activity Tax Credit. That is my belief and I state that unequivocally.

It will happen with the school system; it will happen if we make a nominal investment into the school system that may not cost us money, but if we increase the amount of physical activity that children get in schools and look at some of the barriers for community usage of schools, we can make some decent inroads. Sixty thousand students, immediate family, close to 200,000 residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, add the extended family – I don't know what that number would be, but it would be far greater than 200,000. Six per cent has been a time allocation in Newfoundland and Labrador schools since the beginning of my

time. If you keep having the same over and over and over again and every year it doesn't change, then you can expect to get the same result.

I stated before in the House the minister stated that he wants to increase the outcomes. He'd probably like to see an increase in the scores of our PISA results. While we're not doing too bad, we'd like to see on that standard, that international assessment standard – let's see us go and increase. What I think many people would say is that the healthier the students are, often they make better learners and the more socially engaged they are. I know that there is quality and a lot of other variables as well, but if we can have them in school, then I would think we have a greater chance of achieving the outcomes that we have.

So I would say to the minister on the PISA, look at the highest achievers in our country. They would be – in the math and science, in the STEM areas – Alberta and British Columbia. Look at the amount of physical education that they have in their program and you may see that it's possible that there's a correlation there. Healthier students make better learners. I would say to you is that the be-all and end-all? Absolutely not. There are other variables, but that is one that we can control.

I would say look at the time allocation for the province in all curriculum areas. It's time that we make an adjustment in that. I won't speak to some obvious ones that stand out at me, but I'm sure if the minister were to look at it when he left this Chamber and looked at the program of studies, the time allocation, one would jump out at him and say: Wow, look at that. I would like to think that the physical education one would as well.

I would say to you, big schools like in the Minister of Health and Community Services' in Gander, I would assume that they are not at 6 per cent on physical education because 18 minutes is 6 per cent. They don't go over. They maintain 6 per cent, but 18 and 18 is 36. What happens is that you have every second day, if they're lucky, a 30-minute activity or physical education class. You think that we lose six minutes every time that we offer that program throughout the timetable. Eventually you don't

be long losing some numbers. I would suggest that.

I would also suggest we feed the kids a good meal in all our schools. Now, one would say: Whoa, settle down a little bit. How much would that cost? I would say to you let's look at the benefits that we have with the Kids Eat Smart and making sure that we subject them at a young age to healthy meals. Feed them all, every one of them, and see what the benefits are. It's a long-term investment that exceeds a four-year electoral term, but it's a long-term investment that I would think would yield a good result. Feed them all.

The curriculum: I think the current government has stated that we are seeing revisions in our health curriculum that we have. I spoke in the House in the 49th Assembly stating that the teachers that were at Clarendville Middle School had an intermediate curriculum, a teacher resource that was in the '90s. That was a suggested teacher resource and it is still today in 2021.

One of the case studies that would be in that health curriculum would be when the clocks roll around in 2000: What do you think is going to happen in the year 2000 when the clocks roll around? Remember, back at that time we were looking at traffic lights weren't going to work and it's going to be sort of catastrophic because the computers wouldn't roll over. That's one of the case studies that are in that guide. It would be a shame if that's what we were spending time on in our curriculum.

I know things change quickly and when things change quickly, we have a struggle to keep up. The challenge in curriculum is to try to create something that we can adjunct and add on to, because if it's created today, tomorrow it's a little bit outdated and next week a little more outdated. But we're talking here almost three decades of a curriculum in intermediate health that would be at 5 per cent. I was a little carried away with that one.

When it comes to tourism, on the tourism side for every one dollar that's spent by residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, it is one dollar for our GDP. One dollar spent by those on the Avalon – they travel to the beautiful District of

Bonavista and they spend their money, but for every dollar they spend, \$1 for us. Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador would state that for every one that comes outside the province, it is \$2; it's the same as double our money. You get an international tourist into the District of Bonavista or into our coffers and it's three times.

One would say if we have an air access plan – which the minister says we did. I should've seen it the budget. I read it several times; I didn't see it in the budget. I think HNL has an air access plan, but there is no commitment from government that they're going to follow through with it. I think it's a good plan, even though I haven't seen it. I trust Brenda O'Reilly to say if it's good. I think she has a good sense that it is. What we need is a commitment and see if we can grow the tourism industry from that \$1 billion to \$2 billion or \$3 billion. If most of our tourism is the one for \$1, then the international is one that we can really make some hay in, in the tourism.

One last point on the tourism: We have the Tourism and Hospitality Support Program. One of my questions today was we lost 10.8 per cent of our businesses, according to Destination Canada and it's in the Premier's Advisory Council report. We've lost 10.8 per cent. We invested \$30 million in the last budget; \$12 million wasn't spent. I would say to you was there a need out there for businesses? Yes, there was a need. We lost 10.8 per cent of our businesses.

The only thing I would hope this time is that something would be different. Either the application process may have been too challenging for them or if they didn't have an account. I'm not sure why we wouldn't get – all I would think was that I would hope that we don't do the same for this \$30 million as what we did for the previous \$30 million, because quite conceivably there are going to be more businesses out there that don't get to avail of it.

I would hope that we be bold in our decisions, we be balanced and measured, but we create a plan of which Newfoundlanders and Labradorians could see a growth and a vision where we're going to have more revenue come into the province. By having more revenue coming to the province, we can reduce the taxes

that we have on the Table and the docket to be voted on.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll take a few moments to weigh in on Bill 13, I believe it is, as we grind our way through this, what is another long sitting in the Legislature, sitting late nights. I'd love to be speaking about things in my district, but, hopefully, I'm going to get a chance to do that next week because there are lots of wonderful things happening in the beautiful District of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, and tremendous progress made over the last five years. The focus, initially, was mainly on bringing infrastructure up to standard, et cetera, and now as we move forward I've got a bit of a focus on helping my communities become age friendly and, of course, reducing smoking and increasing physical activity will all of a part of that.

Mr. Chair, we're talking about Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, and the reason we're doing that is to increase the tax on cigarettes and tobacco. Yes, while there will be an increase in revenue, I think more importantly it's to chat about the healthy policy objectives that are this government's desire to achieve.

I have to say that I'm quite pleased with our Premier and this government. Even in this challenging fiscal time, as the Finance Minister brought down the budget, you could clearly see and you can see from a number of measures in advance of the budget coming down, that there is a real focus on wellness, on physical and mental wellness, on helping our population become healthier, and two very renowned folks, Dr. Pat Parfrey and Sister Elizabeth Davis, who are leading the Health Accord NL. We know when we want to switch and make our

population healthier that we don't see those results overnight. Sometimes we can start to make change now in terms of health and you'll see some benefits four or five years down the road, but to have a full, maybe true appreciation for changing health in this province, it will be at least a decade.

We've already heard some discussion here this afternoon, Mr. Chair, in this House on things we're leading in in this province that really we don't have reason to be proud of, when we're leading in chronic illness, we're leading in smoking rates and alcohol rates, et cetera. We, just a few moments ago, debated a bill discussing this government bringing in a Physical Activity Tax Credit where families can get up to \$2,000 and I think that's a wonderful, wonderful thing.

I was going to mention my mom and she would probably not want me to be mentioning here in the Legislature, for sure not to say her age, but as an individual that's into her 70s, very, very, healthy and active every day of the year and what's interesting when I get to see her - it's been a little while now, because she's on the other end of the country - not just my mom but her whole broad circle of friends, they're all very physically active whether it's cycling or walking or dance, all very well.

On the flipside of that, Mr. Chair, it saddens me and I've been through four campaigns, often when you go around and you knock on doors, you'll find someone that's many more years my senior that if they're active they're very, very healthy, yet I've met many folks that are much younger than myself and their health is not good for all kinds of reasons.

We know that smoking is an addiction. I spent 3½ years in Children, Seniors and Social Development and it was very important as a government that we have supports in place for people who would wish to stop smoking. I compare it to eating, those of us who might be wanting to lose 5 pounds. You want to do it when you're feeling full but when you're hungry it's really hard to resist that urge and, obviously, it's a multi-billion dollar industry out there maybe because people try to convince you that there's a quick fix. I don't know smoking. I've never smoked, thankfully, but from people who

have smoked I hear that it's an addiction that's far, far worse than anything else, than food for sure.

Therefore, it's important to have supports in place. One of the things myself and my colleague the Minister of Health, we participated in an announcement over in Eastern Health at the Health Science Centre a couple of years ago where we supported a program where if there was somebody who smokes and they're admitted to hospital for some reason that there would be a program in that hospital so as soon as they're finished their surgery or whatever they're in there for they could get support while they're in the hospital to help them stop smoking if they wanted to.

It's not just increasing taxes on cigarettes so that the vulnerable or the low income will still buy the cigarettes or to put it up so that they can't afford. We want to have a healthier population and that's really what this is about, Mr. Chair.

In this Bill 13, it's important that I mention – quite familiar to myself and my colleague from Labrador West anytime we're dealing with border issues, because we have our neighbours and friends just on both sides of the border in the south and in the west. Bill 13, the Labrador Border Zones Rebate will provide a reduced rate of tax for cigarettes and fine cut tobacco and that will be in Labrador City, Wabush and in Southern Labrador. It goes south down as far as Red Bay.

Mr. Chair, we have to think about the businesses that are in these areas. In L'Anse au Clair, for example, you can drive for five minutes and you're in Quebec. If we don't do this, then we're really impacting the businesses in that area.

I would be remiss, Mr. Chair, if I didn't pause for a moment. I only learned today since I've been in this House that the mayor of Blanc-Sablon passed away today. She was only 58 years old, Mayor Wanda Beaudoin, and she was a wonderful advocate for her community.

Since COVID – and Minister of Health, for sure, and myself and especially the former premier – many, many of our calls – and my other Labrador colleagues here – that we would have with Quebec, because my district starts at the

border in L'Anse au Clair, but there are a handful of communities – 1,500, 1,600 people – a little clustered. It's really our family, our friends. We work quite closely with Mayor Beaudoin and we extend our condolences to her family. Very saddened to hear of her passing, for sure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, I support the direction of the Finance Minister and this government with the increased tobacco tax because I believe it's not just increasing taxes, but it's also providing supports to help people stop smoking. That's what we want at the end of the day, Mr. Chair.

We often hear it said in this House that we are the most rapidly aging province in this country. I was really touched by a statistic that the Health Accord shared with us just recently. I believe it was two or three decades ago you had, maybe, three children for every one senior. I might not have the numbers exactly right, but today it's the flip. You maybe have three or four seniors to every one child. As we age, there are health issues that come with that, but we want people to live their longest, most fullest life possible. We want to encourage people to be active.

When I look back over my short life so far, some of the best memories of my life have been involved in physical activity with my daughter; the Labrador Winter Games that we would have every three years when her and I were both on the same team.

My daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes when she was only six years old. That was a very difficult time for our family. A long time in St. Anthony hospital getting sorted out; seemed like a very, very terrible thing at the time, but all these years later – she's a very healthy 24-year-old now. I look back at how we were forced at that time to read nutrition labels, to look at sugar content, to look at fat, the caloric intake of things. We quickly learned that being active had the same benefit as taking insulin, so the more active we were, the less insulin she needed to take. Some healthy living principles were incorporated into our household all these years ago, and we're none the worse for it, Mr. Chair.

I remember sometimes she'd come home from recess and her jaw would drop and she'd tell us what one of her friends had. So-and-so had a honeybun for recess and that was terrible with all of the calories in a honeybun.

It is about, I say to the Member for Bonavista, educating our young people. I believe that parents have a role to play as well, because what we quickly learned was we couldn't expect her to be out – go for your walk now; you have to walk an hour – if we didn't model that as well. It does have to become a family thing to live healthier, active lives. Certainly it has to be not just in the school or not just in the home, but it has to be community efforts. Across the 18 communities that I represent, there are some wonderful examples of people that are out living healthy, active lives and doing what they can to live their best life right now.

I see my time is gone, Mr. Chair, and happy to support Bill 13.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

It's a pleasure again to represent the scenic District of Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: I just want to touch on a couple of items on the budget again. I'll try to stick to the budget part, but I will comment on my colleague from the District of Bonavista.

I listened to one of, I'm going to say, my relatives the other night talking about the school lunch program. Her granddaughter goes and has breakfast there. She goes over 7:30 and starts to serve breakfast. They go in and cook the toast and give them their juice and their yogurt or their milk, whatever they have. I'm not sure how it's all paid for, to be truthful, now when you bring it up, but I'm sure that they're paying for it themselves, some people are. Some kids can't afford it.

In just listening to her tell one of the stories the other night that a second kid came back for more toast and more yogurt. Everybody got one helping, but the one that runs it said, you know what? There are certain kids here that you give it to them. When they come back, they're going to need it because they're not going to have anything else for the rest of the day. It's something that the government should certainly look at. I think would be very encouraging for all of the schools. If you have healthy kids, more energy and certainly partaking in as much activity as you can in the schools.

When I was in school, we took part in all the sports, but not everybody is involved in sports. There are more activities besides that in schools when you have the healthy living, your guitar lessons; there's dance – and not all in schools, obviously, but all related to school activities and being involved. That's what we have to get. We have to get everybody involved. It starts at the school level. You couldn't be any more correct. If you start at the school, it will carry on for a lifetime, as far as I'm concerned.

I just listened to when he talked about the income tax bill there or the credit that you get for physical activity. I know I was involved with the recreation program in my area in Bay Bulls and I was involved for 13 or 14 years. We started out just having a summer program and then we tried to expand it. We had seven people on our committee first; then we ended up with 12 or 13 before I left. I keep saying "we" because I still consider myself part of the committee, although I'm not.

My daughter started there, I'm going to say, in the program; then she worked there and then she ran the program. Now she's moved on. She went right through the program and that is something that we instill in our community. It went from Bay Bulls to Bauline, but it extended further than that. We needed seven communities. It was a government initiative at the time to have a recreation program and to try to get it running and then run it on your own. I'm going to say we did an awesome job at it.

The first project we started was to try to get a washroom facility for the ball field and the soccer field. That ended up being a \$5-million building in Bay Bulls by the time it was all said

and done. We started with a washroom and that's the building we ended up with. Again, some people don't think it is a great building to have in the community, and every other community would love to have it in their own community. It's a great facility. We ran programs such as the summer program. Right now, they're running an after-school program that is in there. They run a softball program, a soccer program. They're all branches off from the recreation program. It was such a great event.

The government started it and funded it to a certain point with so many students, but we used to have an auction. When you have the auction, there were these great companies that were involved. We would have this auction every May. Up until COVID happened, that was the happening event in the community. It would be a hundred-dollar ticket, eight at a table. You would have a free bar for the night and we'd raise \$70,000. Some nights it was \$75,000. I might be off on this, but I'm going to say we raised close to \$500,000. We have a full-time person that runs that. The councils get involved and they throw a contribution towards the person that runs it. I'm going to say it's somewhere inwards of \$35,000 to \$40,000 per each community.

If this recreation program wasn't there, then each separate municipality would have to try to run their own program and everybody would be doing the same thing in each different community. Now they combined it and made it happen. I'll tell you, it worked out great.

Did we have issues with it? For sure. There are all kinds of growing pains when you're at it, but it turned out great. We also got a grant from the government at the time. I can't remember the dollar amount, because I wasn't in on that. All I know is I was a part of organizing all the sports. Everything that went on in the sports, I had to organize it. The rest of it, somebody else took care of the money; somebody else organized something else.

We'd get the money and we'd have a brainstorming session at The Wilds with all our committee. When we started, we went to this brainstorming and how can we build up our facilities in seven different communities and

what we could do. I would say the one thing that we did wrong in our community is not publicize what we had done and how we had done it. We didn't want any significance or anyone coming back to us – we didn't brag about it. Let's say that. That's the best I can say. We didn't brag about it, which was our own problem.

We did playgrounds. We did upgrades on the soccer field. We did upgrades on the road. We did a softball field in Burnt Cove, a playground in Tors Cove. They were all part of the initiative. Through government agencies, we would probably get one-third of the fundraising through our committees and we'd do it. I tell you, they did a great job. It was a government initiative. I can see being involved in sports and being involved with minor hockey. I was involved in the Southern Shore minor hockey; the Goulds minor hockey right now are there.

When the parents register, they do look for that receipt. They do look for that tax savings, for sure. That's a great initiative because I did have power skating many years ago that I would do and the parents would certainly look for that tax break to be able to claim it.

The one big issue that the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands and, I think, the Member for St. John's Centre mentioned was getting the kids out that couldn't afford to get out. That was the big issue we had. How can we get them into the recreation program? That's still an issue today because some people, they just won't ask, which is unfortunate. You can't do anything about it. They just won't ask. We would never charge them. We'd let them come in. If somebody came in that couldn't afford it, don't tell us. Just put them in the program, register them, take care of them. That was a great initiative.

We also had, I would say, in the community three or four parents that would donate \$150 for the next two kids that came in. It was another great initiative, and great to see in the community. It's great to see that. It all started from the help of government. That's something that you can keep in mind. I think it's the way forward, for sure, when it comes to recreation.

I was going to talk on two or three topics, but I'm going to run out of time, obviously.

One of the other ones that I would talk on – and again, I thought it was absent and I mentioned the other night – is the fishery. I'm not going to dwell on it too much, but I would say that the cod fishery in 1992 was shut down. Thirty years later, there's not one bit of difference in it. Not a bit. We haven't seen any change. There is no sign of it coming back. I think that's unfortunate. I really do. It's sad, to be truthful. They did the same with our salmon fishing. We sit here and the salmon fishing is not back.

We have recreational fishing and we're not sure that can open or it could be in danger because it's being fished in Greenland or somewhere else and they're not doing the same conservation measures that we have. It just seems, okay, we're going to let it go and let it go on and there's nothing we can do. Obviously, we have an issue somewhere. After 30 years, we haven't caught the amount of fish that we have and it's not coming back, or supposedly not coming back, or the science is not there to tell us. That's the issue that I have with it.

It's unfortunate because it's a big industry and as the minister said, if you could get that back. The way I always thought on it, as I came from a small community, right along my district from Petty Harbour – that's probably the biggest fishing industry in the Island as a community – right to St. Shott's there were all kinds of plants and people working. I worked in a fish plant in Bay Bulls. It was two shifts and 500 people working in the community of Bay Bulls in the fish plant. There's not even an existence of the plant being there, so it's gone. But looking at that it's just not there and the seals are obviously an issue. Somebody has to address the issue and I think it's incumbent on the government to bring that up. The fishery is a big industry and I think we could get back at it.

Also, before I finish, I would like to wish all of the schools in the District of Ferryland – graduation day is coming up and I heard other Members speak about it. I wish all of the graduates a happy graduation. Come the end of June they will be moving on to university, or trade school or wherever they may go, so I wish them all the best of luck. I wanted to touch on that as well.

Also, I'm not going to have time, I don't think, but talking about electric cars and going green. The Member for –

AN HON. MEMBER: Lake Melville.

L. O'DRISCOLL: – Lake Melville and another Member behind me there spoke about it, talking about electric cars –

J. DINN: I don't even get named.

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, it wasn't you. It was back here further. But talking about electric cars and stuff like that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm out of time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you very much.

I'm not going to take up my entire time, but I did want to, on this occasion – given the nature of this, which is, again, trying to incentivize people away from nicotine and smoking – refer this entire House of Assembly back to just last October 21 when I was pleased to lead a private Member's resolution about addressing vaping products in youth. I've reached back, I've been in chats with the Canadian Cancer Society and I just wanted to roll in some of their recommendations for our jurisdiction to also consider.

In addition to the tax – that's very important, again, hopefully as a disincentive – I just wanted to read into the record some of those measures that we unanimously supported last fall. I just remind the House that there is still some work to do – actually a lot of work to do.

First of all, we spoke a lot last October about these vaping products, these e-cigarettes. It was interesting, I was working with a gentleman we've all just mourned the loss of and that was George Murphy. He was a big part of that effort last year and a young lady by the name of Julia McCarthy from St. Bonaventure's School, who I

had happened to meet several months before. The initiative, she actually gave me the idea in her own school of trying to see what we could do in terms of policy-maker, in terms of legislators, to help keep these products away from kids.

E-cigarettes came in as a solution for those trying to quit smoking and I think we took our eye off the ball. I have to say I'm suspecting that I'm going to hear from the industry again because I sure heard from them last fall sending me a lot of their own information suggesting that it's still very much an effective harm reduction strategy for keeping people away from cigarettes. I don't know. The health effects that we're seeing out there would suggest otherwise.

Back to the kids – keeping it out of the hands of kids – they're so impressionable. I still see it in my own community of Happy Valley-Goose Bay. I just have to go by the coffee shop at a certain time of day and I know I'm going to see plumes of smoke coming out of kids that are anywhere from 13, 14, 15, maybe 16 years of age – giant plumes enveloping the entire approach to the coffee shop. I'm just thinking we have to do something about this, folks.

Again, the Canadian Cancer Society is saying what can we do to ban sales in adult-only vape shops. In other words, ban sales and restrict it only to shops where adults could procure these elements. Also, by reducing the number of vendors, we're going to make enforcement a lot easier. We need to get that minimum age of purchase for these products up to 21. That's for tobacco and e-cigarettes.

It's interesting. Studies have found that by raising the age from 18 to 21 years of age, it has been found to reduce youth smoking by 25 per cent from 15 to 17 year olds and by 15 per cent from 18 to 19 year olds. Just moving up that notch, just getting it out of those high school ages would really make a big difference.

Restricting flavours: This is something our province is still needing to act on. Much of the country has now moved to do that. I would love to see a bill coming forward that would very much limit these flavours. Some of them are just frankly attractive to maybe some of the interests of our youth. We really need to do that.

Limiting sales to face to face, that is, banning these Internet-sale strategies and practices that are out there. We need to really implement retail licensing. Another aspect, again, that I look to government to think about is the regulatory authority over standards. That's everything from packaging these flavours and the nicotine concentrations that are out there. There are limits and they're sneaking in with these e-cigarettes. We could do a lot to tighten that up. Other jurisdictions in our country are doing this.

The whole marketing, where these products are sold – they're sort of somehow cool to be pursuing – and much tougher fines for infractions. The final point that the Canadian Cancer Society wanted me to pass on here today is there should be a tax on e-cigarettes. Why not?

I do want to thank – again, in the memory of George Murphy – Julia McCarthy. Hopefully things are going well for you. I haven't talked to you in a couple of months, but I'm sure she's still at St. Bon's. And Kevin Coady, he's the executive director for the Newfoundland and Labrador Alliance for the Control of Tobacco.

I thank government for making as much a deterrent as possible on cigarettes. We have a whole bunch of other measures that this House has unanimously supported and I'm hoping to see progress on that as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak to this bill. I'll just say upfront that I'll support the bill and I'll leave it at that.

This is a money bill, of course, so we can speak about whatever we want. I want to pick up where I left off in Question Period before I was told that apparently I couldn't ask questions about an Officer of the House in the Legislature,

even though he reports to the House of Assembly. I do respect the Speaker's ruling and I'm certainly not challenging his ruling. I can like it or not; I can agree with it or disagree with it, but I will respect it. I was very puzzled, to say the very least.

I was even more puzzled why the government and the government Members would be so against – and they were all shouting and bawling. I'm trying to understand why they would be so against actually answering the question. I don't understand it. It makes no sense to me why they would not want to answer a question, why they would not want to hold an Officer of this House of Assembly accountable, given the fact that many of their own constituents were in the same boat as my constituents and everyone on both sides of the House: people denied their right to vote. I'm just baffled. I really am baffled as to why we wouldn't want to get down to the bottom of it. It doesn't make any sense.

Why would we not want to have an independent investigation? Let's find out what went on so the public knows what went on. Why don't we want an Officer of this House of Assembly who reports to this House of Assembly, why wouldn't we want to be able to question him and ask him why did you make these decisions? Separate the facts from the fiction. It makes no sense to me. There's no logical – I've thought about it over and over and over again ever since the election. I cannot come up with a logical reason why anybody in this House of Assembly, anybody, would be against it. It just doesn't make sense.

If something does make sense, doesn't make common sense, then there has to be some other alternative motive. I mean, there has to be. I don't know what it is. Are we afraid that if there's an investigation of the election and everything that went on, that there is going to be a whole bunch of communications between the Chief Electoral Officer and the Premier or of the Liberal Party? Is that what we're afraid that's going to come out? I don't know. There has to be some reason. It doesn't make sense.

I keep raising it over and over again; can't get an answer. I asked in the House of Assembly before. Interestingly, I was allowed to ask it the

first time. But, anyway, I asked it the first time. All I got was rhetoric about we're going to have a committee to change the Elections Act and so on. It has nothing to do with an independent investigation and holding anyone accountable. But it was just basically giving a non-answer, as far as I'm concerned, to deflect.

I was allowed to ask the question that time but this time I couldn't – I wasn't allowed to ask the question. But the Members were all there in support of that saying he can't ask that question. I don't know why you don't want to answer the question. I've brought it up time and time again during my speaking time. I presented a couple of petitions. I know the Member for Bay of Islands have presented petitions. I know the Member for Bay of Islands has brought this up over and over again. We still can't seem to get any commitment and we can't seem to get any answer. It makes no sense. It makes no sense.

I'll say this, Mr. Chair, if anybody in this House of Assembly thinks – and I've said this before; I'll say it again. I'm here to co-operate. I really am. I am here to co-operate with government. I could not make it any clearer. I supported the budget. I supported some of the things in the budget that may not be popular. I have said that I would continue to support things if they had to be done and if they were the right thing. I said I'm willing to co-operate. I've done everything I can to try to be co-operative and do what is right. I really have. On this issue we're going to be at loggerheads. It's as simple as that.

If you're not going to answer the question in Question Period, fine and dandy, don't answer it. But you're going to hear it and you're going to hear it over and over and over again, because one thing I can tell you, Mr. Chair, is nobody is shutting me up. Not happening. No one is shutting me up. No one is shutting me down. I'll continue on with this. I'll stay at this all night. I have no problem staying at this all night and tomorrow night and next week and next session. Next fall, I'll start on it again. I have no problem doing this and I will.

I've been accused, myself and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, of – what was it – hijacking the House, I believe, was the term that was used. I hijacked the House, my God, because you actually wanted to ask some

questions and bring up some issues. Last time we tried to bring up some issues, there was a deal made, which we weren't included in, of course. That deal meant that myself and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, oh, we couldn't ask any questions or nothing. We were supposed to just sit there like puppets. That was the expectation.

Of course, we objected to that, naturally, and we couldn't ask questions so we utilized the closure motion. We utilized the closure motion, as Members would remember, and we kept her going for an hour or two or whatever it was – I can't remember how long it was – to bring forward all the issues and the questions and the issues that we had on behalf of our constituents that we weren't allowed to ask questions on because we were independent Members. We did that.

We got accused of hijacking the House of Assembly, and I don't really care. I could care less. I couldn't possibly care less. I've said many times there's not one person in this House of Assembly who voted for me, other than the Member for St. George's there. He's a constituent. He's a big supporter. I thank him for that. Other than him, there's not – oh, and the Member for Mount Pearl North, but she had to vote for herself. Other than that, she would've voted for me.

L. STOYLES: I didn't vote for you.

P. LANE: She didn't vote for me. She voted for herself. I voted for myself.

Mr. Speaker, or, Mr. Chair, I should say, at the end of the day, I'm not going to let it go, because I keep hearing from lots of people who don't want me to let it go. And why should I let it go? Why should any of us let it go? Why should we say that's acceptable? Again, how is it acceptable? I could go on and on and on and on and on with examples, and I'm prepared to. I've done it before and I'll keep on doing it.

Let's talk about scrutineering, as an example. We all know that in an election there is a process for scrutinizing the votes. You all have scrutineers. This last election, like I said there yesterday, I think it was, they showed me on a video a bunch of people at a table doing

something. They could have been having a game of Gowl or something. They could have been playing Texas hold 'em, or maybe they were doing crossword puzzles. I don't know what they were doing. I have no idea what they were doing. There was some people at a table doing something, and that's what they call scrutinizing the votes.

Then at some point in time they showed: Oh, Paul, we have seven spoiled ballots here today, look, now this one here has your name on it but they wrote Paul Lane, Liberal, so that one is no good. This one here they just voted – they wrote whatever they wrote, can't pick out the name or something. Someone voted none of the above, and whatever it was, and so we have five or six today. I said: What about the votes that you deemed do go into the count, because these are the ones that you're saying shouldn't go in. What about the ones that you determined should go in, aren't I allowed to see those to make sure that they're right? No, you can't see those.

How about the counting of them, how do I know – normally you count them out. When you're doing them you put all of mine in a pile, all of the PCs in a pile, the Liberals in a pile and the NDPs in a pile and you start putting them in groups of 10 and then you start going 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, okay, 100 for you, and 10, 20, 30, whatever, 50 for you and 51 for you, and I get to watch that. I didn't get to watch that. How do I know when the person who was writing down the results, that's 100 for such-and-such, that they never put the 100 under the wrong name, or whatever?

That's why you have scrutineers. That's why the Elections Act allows for scrutineers. That didn't happen. That wasn't allowed to happen. Now, tell me how that is possibly right. It's not right. What it is, is totally wrong. But for some reason, we're okay with it. For some reason, we're okay to let that slide and say: Oh, that's all right, b'y. That's good enough, that's all you can do.

Mr. Chair, it makes no sense.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his speaking time has expired.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to speak on behalf of the constituents of Labrador West again. I would be remiss if I didn't mention that this week up in Labrador West is Men's Mental Health Awareness Day. We've always had our concerns and stuff like that. We've been through some very tough times in Labrador West over the years. This week the Labrador West Mental Health Coalition is doing an event there for men's mental health. If you're in Labrador West, get some free soup and also some information on the mental health services available in Labrador West. I can't go out this week without mentioning that especially home.

To the act there for the tobacco administration, it's very important that we continue to encourage people to go in the direction and find different options to quit smoking. It's not easy. It's one of the hardest addictions out there to give up really. I've talked to many people who are smokers and it's quite the challenge. I know one individual, my neighbour. He's an interesting character, originally from the Green Bay area. I'm sure the Chair will approve of him. He's quite the character and he always likes to come by. If I'm at something or something like that, he always says he loves work; he can watch it all day. If I'm out at something, he likes to sit around and have a chat with me.

Anyway, one week you'll see him and he says: I'm giving up smoking. I'll say: Oh, very good, you're going to give it up. He said: Oh yeah, give it up. Three or four days later he comes back and he's there with a cigarette in his mouth. I go: Oh, that lasted long. He said: I can't do it. I tried, can't do it. It's always back and forth. Like I said, it's really hard and he finds it really hard to quit. It's something he actually has done since as a teenager. I honestly say I don't think he remembers a time that he wasn't smoking.

It is hard, but we must encourage it. We must do everything in our power to get people to find a solution that's right for them. With anything, a one-size solution doesn't fit everybody, but we

need to find different ways and approaches to do it. It's like anything else. We were talking about in the coming year now a tax on sugary drinks and that. That's an addiction. Caffeine, especially pop, is an addiction. I'll honestly admit I'm a caffeine addict. I drink a lot of tea and coffee. It is an addiction and sugar itself, you can even argue, is an addiction in itself as well.

We try to find ways and solutions to get people to curb their habits and break these habits that promote unhealthy lifestyles. We need to find solutions to that. Taxing is one thing, but we also have to find different things as well. If we do go down the route of sugary drinks and stuff like that, what are we going to put in place to help people, encourage people to do something different, to create a healthy habit in the other sense of it?

We look at healthy foods, access to healthy foods. They're expensive. Healthy food in this province is very expensive. We need to find ways and solutions that we make it more accessible, easier to get your hands on and at affordable cost that no matter where you are as an income, it's affordable to you.

The hon. Member for Ferryland, he talked about in schools and about the in-school program, the Kids Eat Smart program. Well, like he said, it's a program that I think is absolutely wonderful and I'm very happy that all three schools in my district – actually four schools, including the francophone school – have a Kids Eat Smart program. My daughter talks about it. My daughter comes back and she says: Oh, Mr. White was there today with the yogurt and stuff like that. The kids notice it's there, and if they're partaking in it, excellent, good for them. We need to make sure we have the options there, starting with our kids in school.

My daughter – I'll always say it – my oldest daughter, she eats better than I do. No doubt about it. She's not afraid of anything that's green. It started because when my daughter was born, my wife was going to culinary school. At the same time, those healthy habits got transmitted from wife on to my daughter. Oh, there's no hope for Jordan, but at least my daughter has a better chance than her old man.

As I said, it starts as a kid. That's what I said. They had access – my wife was going through school, culinary school, so my daughter has better habits than me and I'm very happy about that, that she has the ability and that she picks up on things that she knows are better for her. I don't think I have ever seen my daughter drink a soft drink, and she has no interest in it. So good for her.

These are good, healthy habits that we need to promote and make sure that no matter where you're to in this province, you have access to healthy food; you have access to better choices to make healthier decisions. I think the best start we can give in this province for anybody is that they can make the healthy choices and not go down the road like I went down as someone growing up in the '90s, where all you saw on TV were things for chips and drinks and all that stuff. That's it. My generation is more towards that way. Hopefully now we can see that where we have kids going down the road of making healthier choices, making better choices for their health and we'll see better health outcomes because they made those better choices.

Like the hon. Member for Lake Melville talked about, seeing teenagers and stuff out vaping. I see it, too. That's something that came out that was unregulated and, at the time, was sold as something that was smoking cessation. That was false advertising. Now we have to bring it in and reel it in and control it. He made some great points about age limits, removing flavours, things like that. Those are good choices that we can make to guide people and the youth down the right path that just because it was invented doesn't mean you have to use it.

We'll always see stuff like that pushed especially with the amount of nicotine. The amount of nicotine in those things is unreal. A cigarette has nothing compared to what a vape has on it. These things can be potentially dangerous, so we need to make sure we guide kids and some adults down the road. Make healthier choices. At the end of the day in the long run, you will be thankful that you did make those choices, especially as you reach your later years.

I always say my grandfather, 83 years old, he lost a lung to industrial disease; he lost a kidney

to cancer and he lost his hearing in the workplace as well. But now, in the world we have since his time, we have safety precautions put in the workplace so you're not breathing in toxic and harmful things into your lungs. We have hearing protection now. We have things like that. These are because of choices made after the fact, so now let's make the right choice.

Let's put programs and stuff in place that healthy food at the point of purchase is more affordable to people and make sure that we do put things in place and programs in place that encourage healthy eating at school. Start at the school to tell people that this is a good choice; this is a better choice. You might not see it today, but down the road you will see why we told you these things.

Make easier access to healthy food in schools, like the Kids Eat Smart program. If there is a way we can improve it or expand on it or do our part in the schools to make sure that kids have a healthy lunch, a healthy breakfast, they can start the day and learn because, unfortunately, we have all seen it. My colleague here has mentioned it a number of times. We know when we see children in school that never had a healthy – or even had breakfast, that they came to school and they weren't ready to learn. They're putting them at a disadvantage. We can't have any kids at a disadvantage. We have to have them at the most advantage.

Encouraging expansion of physical activity in school, encouraging kids to participate, even those kids who may not be interested in team sports, but I'm sure there is something that we could work with them on to encourage them to be physically active as well and to make sure it's inclusive to all children and that we give them the opportunities to be physically active and make the right choices.

We have a long road ahead of us as a province, but if we're encouraging our youth right at the beginning to make the right choices and give them all of the advantages in this world, then we'll be way better off, and I'm sure of that.

With that, Mr. Chair, thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to have another opportunity to speak. I want to continue on now about the election because I know the Members opposite want to hear all about it, and so I'm going to make sure they do. I talked about the scrutineering process, Mr. Chair, so let's move on to something else that happened.

For those Members who might not be aware, there were also issues that occurred with the telephone system once the election, of course, took place. It was interesting because the telephone system – here's an interesting little fact, people before were told that in order to vote you had to go online. You had to go online to vote, to get your ballot and so on. But interestingly enough, not too long after that, they implemented a telephone system so you could phone in and get your ballot.

Now, the interesting part about it was that I found out, personally, about the telephone system by people pointing it out to me on Facebook and that there were government Members that were sharing all of the information. They had memes up and everything about how you can go vote on the telephone. Now, I didn't know anything about it and I was a candidate. I was like: Jesus, how could this possibly be? I wrote the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, I sent him an email and I said: What is going on?

CHAIR: Excuse me.

I remind the hon. Member to mind your language, please.

P. LANE: What did I say? I don't know what I said. I'm sorry if I said –

CHAIR: Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: The J-word.

P. LANE: Did I? Okay, I apologize, Mr. Chair. I didn't even realize I said it. I didn't even know I said it. I thought I said gee whiz, but anyway.

Mr. Chair, I didn't know anything about it until it was pointed out to me. I'm saying: Well, how do they know about this? Where did this even come from? I'm a candidate and I know nothing about it. I sent an email, and I believe my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands did as well, and said: What is this all about? Lo and behold – I don't know if it was the next day or what it was – all of a sudden we all get an email saying: We now have a telephone system. You can now vote by telephone.

But there were Members who had this posted on Facebook a couple of days before, and had Facebook memes made up and everything. How did they know? I'm a candidate and I didn't know, so how did they know? There had to be some advance communication to them. Again, it baffles the mind how that could have happened.

Anyway, they did put a telephone system in place, and when they put the telephone system in place, of course, the first thing that happens now: People are phoning, phoning and phoning; can't get through. Then the system crashed. Then they decided: Okay, bring down some of the people from the feds. I'm assuming at the same time they reached out to Seamus to get some campaign workers, they said send down some people to look after the phones as well. That's what they did, and so now Elections Canada was taking calls.

Interestingly enough, there were people calling Elections Canada and that, and I know a lot of people said they called an Elections Canada (inaudible) and they said: Instead of taking your information, we'll pass it on to Elections Newfoundland and Labrador. Guess what? There were a number of people they didn't pass it on to. Or if they did passed it on to them, they passed it on and they took it and they put it in the shredder or in the garbage or they did something with it. I don't know what they did with it. They lost it. It wasn't passed on. I had people who told me that they called and tried to get a ballot, it was Elections Canada personnel, and they said they were going to pass it on and someone was going to call them back from Elections NL and they never received a phone call first nor last. First nor last.

Then, of course, we had the online business, applying for a ballot online. I'd love to know

how many times that computer system crashed. I'd love to know how many times it crashed and how many times someone went in – I had a couple of people who said: I tried a couple of times. I tried on a couple of occasions to get a ballot online and I couldn't get through on the computer. The computer lines crashed or whatever happened. I couldn't get through and I gave up. I have to work, I got a life and I got kids, whatever. I made an effort, it wasn't available and so I didn't vote.

Now, that's if you had a computer. How many seniors in this province don't have a computer? Even seniors who had a computer, part of the process was you had to take a picture of your ID on your iPhone and then you had to download that to the computer. Now, how many of the seniors had a computer plus an iPhone? How many of them knew how to do it? Because I didn't know how to do it. I'd be the first one to admit that I didn't know how to do it. Thank God I had a pretty tech-savvy person and some people on my election team who knew how to do it. I just forwarded it all to them and they took care of it all and so I didn't have to worry about it. But I didn't know how to do it. How can we call this a proper system?

The Commissioner for Legislative Standards, the Chief Electoral Officer said: I am prepared for a pandemic election. I never said that; he said it. I'm prepared for a pandemic election. How is that preparation? How is it preparation when the phone lines are down on day one and the computer system is crashing? Now you have to bring in all of these extra resources, you have to bring in Elections Canada and everything else to try to deal with the onslaught and the mess. But he was prepared. He wasn't prepared. He definitely wasn't prepared and he as much as said so.

I listened to some of the commentary he made in the media when he tried to backpedal a bit. Basically what he was saying was he was prepared for a COVID election with in-person voting. Being prepared for a COVID election and being prepared for a COVID election with in-person voting are two distinctly different things. Saying I'm prepared, all that meant was: Yeah, we got the church halls all rented out and we have tape on the floor so people are going to be six feet apart when lining up. We're going to

have someone that's going to go back and forth and sanitize the handles on the door or keep the door open so that they don't have to touch the handle. We're going to have some hand sanitizer when they walk in. Then when you go to vote you're going to get your pencil and then you're going to take your pencil and throw it in the garbage and no one else is going to use it. Then someone is going to run down behind the partition there where you go to vote and they're going to wipe down the table with sanitizer. That's all he was prepared for.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Yeah, the Member says it sounds pretty safe to me. Yeah, it does. It sounds pretty safe to me, too, if that's what happened. But that's not what happened and that is not what you call being prepared for a pandemic election. It's not.

How anybody over there would possibly be heckling and suggesting that there's something wrong with what I'm saying, you need to get – anyway, I won't say what I want to say because I don't want to be out of order. But I would just say you're trying to defend the indefensible. That's the bottom line. You're trying to defend the indefensible. This election was nothing but a mess. It was a total mess. It never should have been called to begin with, when it was called; never should have been called. To say we had to have a pandemic election –

J. HOGAN: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: The Minister of Justice, I would say, Mr. Chair, he's the guy who could be answering a few questions instead of heckling, but he has nothing to say. He's afraid to give us the answers. All he wants to do is just go heckling from across the way. I'm not going to be intimidated or shot down by him either, I can tell you that, or anybody else over there.

Mr. Chair, this election was a mess and they're trying to defend the indefensible. Actually, they're not even trying to defend it, they're trying to make it go away. I can guarantee you, it isn't going away; not happening.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR (Trimper): Thank you very much.

The next speaker, please.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm probably going to be a pretty unpopular fella here now because I'm actually going to speak to the bill.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. DWYER: Bill 13, we're increasing the price on tobacco, which we also did in the fall. Five cents in the fall, 3.8 cents now, you're looking at about nine cents, \$1.80 a pack for a pack of 20s. This is not a deterrent. I'm a smoker, by the way, I'll put that out there. I've been smoking a long time. I'm not proud of it at all.

AN HON. MEMBER: Then just quit.

J. DWYER: Well, that's all right for you to say.

This is not a deterrent, it's an attack on people with addictions. It's very much so an addiction. I understand what we're doing with programming with the youth, to keep the youth from smoking, and that's the direction and that's where our resources need to be put.

As we know, people that can't stop, they're just going to find the black market to get their fix and it's going to be an unregulated product. So not only is this tax putting more burden on our health care system because of unregulated products in the marketplace, it's not a deterrent, it's an opportunity for people to go look elsewhere.

The programs are good, but, again, we can't force people to come to terms with their addictions. As we know, the first step of getting rid of an addiction is acknowledging that you have one. The next step is wanting help to stop. So taxing people to the hilt, that's not going to get you there.

We need to understand the reasons for smoking and not to impose our own personal habits just because we're not smokers. It's not really right

for us to sit around a caucus table and the Cabinet table and have no input from anybody that's not a smoker, I guess, and let them know what the different reasons are behind it. Because we need to understand the reasons for smoking and not impose our own personal opinions or habits on those that are – to pick and choose. Because really what we're doing is we're looking through rose-coloured glasses. We're making and we're passing an opinion on something we don't understand.

I understand it. I've been smoking since I was seven. Actually, the first time I got caught I was seven. So I was smoking long before that.

Like I said, I'm here to let you know that this is an addiction that's not easy to stop. I've tried to stop on many occasions and I'd prefer not to be smoking. Because, as I said tongue in cheek before, I like to pay taxes – I don't like paying taxes. I'd prefer if they weren't there. Like I said, it just props up the black market.

I saw a meme on Facebook there recently and there were two kind of walk-up windows kind of thing, you know with the hole there and everything. One lineup was full. It was just blocked solid going right out of the screenshot or whatever. Then in the other picture there was nobody in the lineup. The two headers over the windows were medications and surgery, and lifestyle change. Which line do you think was full and which line do you think was empty? Medications and surgery was full because it's available, it's there; it's what they understand.

So what we need to look at is putting in an effort to let people know – don't tell them that it's a bad habit, don't tell them they have to quit because you don't smoke and stuff like that because, at the end of day, to be quite honest, it's a little bit insulting because it's not really understanding the problem and the addiction.

Like I said, youth and education, the best deterrent is to teach them early. It comes down to in our schools and stuff. I was very impressed, Mr. Chair, when you were sitting on the floor as a Member to say about raising the age. I thought that was a really intuitive message, actually, because you have to be 18 to vote in the federal election and stuff like that. Like I said, if it's an opportunity not to see that end goal, I would

even so much as say put up the age of drinking as well and make it all 21 and leave it at that for everything, except for driving, of course.

With that being said, we can't tax people with addictions. There are people with addictions to food, so what happens? We're going to start taxing food? Where does it stop? Like I said, I have no problem with it. I voted in the fall and I'll vote this time to agree with the bill and the new tax regime because of the health care system and the economy we find ourselves in now, but we can't just pick and choose through rose-coloured glasses where we choose to tax and who we choose to tax.

Like my friend there with the coffee addiction, he's not going to notice that big of a difference in the price of coffee because of the sugar tax. The price of his cup of coffee is not going to go up incrementally the same as what cigarettes have been going up over years and years. I guess when I first started, they were probably about less than \$2 a pack, and now they're about \$15. Like I said, in my lifetime, it's become do as I say, and I don't understand where you're coming from and I don't understand why you can't stop. You should be able to just stop cold turkey.

My dad actually did stop cold turkey, and lucky to say, that was more than 40 years ago. I commend him for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: I do think that lifestyle change is what we need to promote, as opposed to just taxing people into oblivion. It's about understanding the programs that are out there. It's about the availability of the programs, that's for sure. That's another good one. It's about working with people and letting them realize.

The first thing I said is acknowledging that you have an addiction. Secondly, it's about wanting help, because if you don't actually want the help, then you're never going to avail of any of those programs. Like I said, hopefully we realize that there are other things that can be done to curb people addictions, but it is certainly not in sending them to the black market to try and seek out unregulated products, which we know are in the marketplace.

With that being said, once the House closes this session, I am actually going to give it a good go again to quit smoking.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I congratulate the Member for speaking the honesty and the truth that he feels. You can never go wrong when you speak honesty and truth in this House. As you said earlier, you're the most hated man here; you're never hated for telling the truth and saying yourself that you have a few concerns about smoking and the addiction that it is to you. It's not just you; it is too many other people. I will say to the Member that it takes courage to do that and congratulations for having the courage to stand up and do that. You're not hated, by no means; you're actually applauded for standing up and speaking how you feel.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: Mr. Chair, again, I could speak on the bill, but this is a money bill again and I explained to the people watching that we can speak about whatever we feel in the province.

We're not going to get too many more opportunities on this. The House may close in early July. July 1, I think, is the date. We're not going to have too many more opportunities because this is where you can bring up the issues that you feel the strongest about. It is the election. I hear my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands speaking it again. If there is nothing I heard more in my time, Mr. Chair, during the election, after the election, it is what happened in the election of 2021. It is a disgrace actually. It is an actual disgrace.

I make no apologies, Mr. Chair, for standing up and speaking continuously on this. As I said earlier, the budget has passed, so these are all things to make sure that what we approved in the budget will be done, like the tax on the smoking

and other things, so I'm going to spend a few minutes speaking on the election itself.

How can anybody look at me or look at the people in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and say this was a fair election? Winning or losing is not the issue. Winning or losing is not the issue for me, absolutely not. The issue for me is the people that were so sad, the people who tried so hard, the people who did everything they possibly could to vote and still couldn't vote. What kind of day is it, in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Canada – what kind of day – when the government opposite will not look into and have an investigation in why people couldn't vote? What kind of day is it?

We hear we're going to change the Elections Act. Sure, and I agree. The Elections Act should be changed; it's going to be changed. But what kind of system do we have where we have an Officer of this House of Assembly who said, apparently to the Premier, that he is ready to run a pandemic election when people's rights – their right to vote was infringed upon and not being able to vote?

The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands mentioned earlier about this number. I found out about that number. I think it was on a Saturday or a Sunday morning. I wrote the Commissioner a very stern email. Guess what? Two hours later, he put the number up: Oh, here's the number.

I'm not being cynical and I'm not paranoid. I'm definitely not paranoid, because it's factual. Do you know there are Liberal candidates – I know of a Liberal candidate, on that Sunday before he made the announcement, was handing out a brochure with the number on it. The number that we didn't know. You didn't know, Mr. Chair. You're an independent. You didn't know. The Opposition didn't know. The Third Party didn't know. We didn't know. But the Liberal Party had it. That's shameful.

An independent Officer of this House of Assembly –

P. LANE: Supposed to be independent.

E. JOYCE: Supposed to be independent. Officer of this House of Assembly dealing with one party. Factual.

It was confirmed in writing and on Facebook by Members putting it up on Facebook. An independent Officer of this House of Assembly dealing with one party and excluding the PC Party, the Third Party and the three independents. Excluding us. And we're trying to say he's independent.

Mr. Chair, I go back to me personally. I want to go back. I hate to tie this in. People will say: Here Eddie Joyce goes again. It's true, because I remember the same thing, Mr. Chair, when the person from the Liberal Party, from the government at the time, was in contact with Bruce Chaulk, silently came out a year, a year and a half later in writing because I was going to release their names. When the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands – when we found that out, I said: That don't surprise me. That's not the first time he did it. I have a letter stating that he did do it.

Why is the government nervous of bringing the Commissioner for Legislative Standards into this House of Assembly and let him answer our questions? If there is nothing wrong, if all of the allegations that were made, we're saying he got justification. Fine. But we have to have him answerable to this House of Assembly. It just can't keep going. What if there's a by-election? What if one of the court cases (inaudible)? What if? What confidence do we have in the Commissioner for Legislative Standards? What if? What if it's thrown out? Who's going to have the confidence in the Commissioner for Legislative Standards?

Mr. Chair, I'll go right from day one when this was happening with the phone number. I have all of this in writing. I sent it all in an email. This is not just talk; I put it in writing. I got responses back from them. The other thing that was very upsetting to me, Mr. Chair, and I think part of the change was the legislation where you could have scrutineers there. He was adamant: No scrutineers. Adamant. That's our fundamental right, to have people review the voting. It's our fundamental right.

If we had the election on the day it was supposed to happen, we would all have scrutineers while every ballot is being counted in every poll. That is under the act. That is our act. I am not sure where the Commissioner for Legislative Standards has the authority to change the act. I asked that question in this House and no one could answer it. What gives the Commissioner for Legislative Standards the authority to change the act to not allow scrutineers at the polling station when the votes were counted?

It was simple. It was all they had to do and it was simple. Every one of us here in this room, everybody in this room has changed the way we do work. How many people in the last year went on Zoom meetings? How many? If you're counting the ballots – and I'll use Humber - Bay of Islands – from Humber - Bay of Islands, here's the suggestion I made at the time: You have two scrutineers there. You have three on Zoom. Take a ballot up, show it to the camera and put it back down. That was refused. It was so simple. The question I have to ask is: Why didn't he do that? Why did he break the act and not allow scrutineers?

After writing him and explaining to him and giving the citation of the act that he's breaking, he said, okay, I'll make a compromise. We'll let you Zoom in and we'll look at you over in the corner – you can see people over in the corner – and we'll show you some spoiled ballots. I said that's not good enough, but that's all we're going to do, show you spoiled ballots. While you're looking at five or 10 people over in the corner over there, seeing them running around, you have no idea. Then, when they took up the ballot – takes the ballot, turns – you can never see it anyway. But a spoiled ballot, they will bring it up and show it to you.

Then, when they were allowed in to do a few advance polls I think it was, they actually were there showing the ballots for two or three, but for the rest they wouldn't do it. It's under the act you can do it. For part of it, we'll let you look at them; the other part, we won't let you look at them.

It astonishes me why a government, who have a clear majority in this House of Assembly, are so nervous, why they are so upset that myself, the

Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands and the NDP are raising concerns – and the Opposition, also. It's all parties. I'm just looking here. All people on this side are raising concerns. We're all elected, so it's not that we have to worry.

I'll be back, Mr. Chair. I see my time is up right now.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

The next speaker is the hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development and the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

J. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly my privilege and honour to speak on this bill here this evening. I certainly want to wish the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue good luck and a safe journey on his trying to move away from his smoking addiction.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. ABBOTT: There are way too many of us in the province who have had and are suffering that particular addiction. If you tie it back to the purpose of the bill, which is, obviously, to raise the tax on cigarettes and tobacco, the evidence will suggest that as prices increase, the consumption will go down. Albeit there are individuals who are addicted, that's not going to be an automatic reason to dissuade them from smoking. But we are going in the right direction, both from a tax policy point of view and from a public health point of view, so I do commend the minister for bringing that forward.

I know in previous work that I have done around health and health care, one of the biggest challenges we face in the province – and in terms of driving our health care costs and our consumption of health care resources – are our chronic diseases. Smoking and the results of smoking for COPD and other related illnesses are placing a toll on our system. If and when we can reduce the consumption of, in this case, tobacco or alcohol or other drugs, then we have a chance of improving the health of the population and certainly reducing the pressure on our health care system. I'm obviously supportive of the bill as it goes forward.

For those who don't know and might be interested, I am the second John Abbott who has been elected to this House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. ABBOTT: The first one was in 1913. While I was waiting to get into the House, there was slight delay so I had time to do a little bit of research, a little bit of history seeking and finding out about the institution and its history. It was very interesting to find out.

I had known this through time, but I got a little bit more detail. He's no relation. He was from Bonavista. He was elected in 1913 and was in this House for 10 years, until 1923. For my friends maybe to the left here but certainly of my interest as well, that John Abbott was with the Fishermen's Protective Union and was certainly a social, economic and political force back at the turn of the last century for quite a number of years.

He was also widely known as Honest John. So I will let my colleagues know that is the moniker I hope to replicate in this House in my role as minister in the Cabinet and, certainly, working with my constituents.

AN HON. MEMBER: John 2.0.

J. ABBOTT: Yeah, thank you. John 2.0, right on.

I doubt he had a Facebook page but if you google him you will find out a lot. Actually, he has quite a storied past in terms of public service in this province.

When I look at my role here in participating in any of the debates, for me, it's obviously listening to both sides. Yes, the government will have its position, but we have to be in a position and be prepared to respond, obviously, to the Opposition, the Third Party and the independents for the comments, criticisms and suggestions that they make.

I've heard quite a number of very positive, constructive comments when it comes to the issue that we're debating. It's what other things can and should we be doing to improve the health of the population when it comes to

smoking cessation. Those are some of the things that I'll be interested in pursuing under my mandate and to bring some of those issues forward.

We touched on the issues of poverty, people with very low incomes and their ability to deal with, in the previous bill, physical activity. That's something I'll be looking at, when we address the Poverty Reduction Strategy and our review of income support, is how we can channel existing resources to those who need it most. When we're looking at any of our government policies, there are inconsistencies, some work at cross-purposes. Part of my role, I think, has to be in how we can sort some of that out so we can channel more resources to those people who need the support.

The physical activity piece is something that I'm very supportive of. My preference, in terms of physical activities, is hiking. So now, I think I'm going to have to join a formal hiking club to take advantage of the minister's new tax credit. Other than that, we'll continue doing those kinds of physical activities and encourage others.

I'm also interested in our ability as a government to look at how we can stimulate more physical and well-being activities across the province. The Department of Health and Community Services, the Department of CSSD and others are working on different programs and different policies to, in fact, do that. What will be important is that we work continuously with the community.

There are quite a number of community organizations that are very focused on well-being. I think we need to work harder, working with my colleague of Municipal Affairs, to make sure that our municipalities are encouraged and incentivized, where needed, to really – for me, it's to step up to the plate in their communities. They know their constituents, their population much better than we know at the provincial level. It is important, I think, to embrace that level of government and to encourage and support them with their populations.

We're looking at issues around transportation, to get seniors out to meaningful social activities, and that helps them for their mental and physical health. It reduces the pressure on our health care

system, but really, more importantly, helps them to live much more healthy and productive lives. That's what they want and that's what they ask for. If they're left alone in their own homes with nobody visiting, nobody to bring them out and to support them, then their mental health is going to suffer. We saw that in spades through the COVID-19 pandemic. The one issue that kept coming forward time after time is the social isolation, whether they lived in their own home, even in an apartment building and, certainly, in our nursing homes and the like.

I was meeting with the chair of our Provincial Advisory Council today, and she laid out a number of issues that the council talked about yesterday, and that was certainly top of mind. There are a lot of things that we can do here through very creative policies, supported through the tax system where needed, to encourage a more healthy population. I'm sure the minister will be bringing forth more of those initiatives in subsequent budgets.

For our part at the Department of CSSD, we're, as I said, looking at how we can restructure the Poverty Reduction Strategy so that, in fact, we can encourage and support more people on low incomes to become more active in their communities and get the support they need that we and many of us take for granted. That's really the focus of what I think the government needs to be doing and should be doing. I'm encouraged by the support, I think, on all sides of the House here, that a government that is progressive in our social policy will be one that would be supported wildly by all Members of this House and the population at large.

I want to compliment the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board through her willingness to listen through the budget process, through the Cabinet discussions, through the caucus discussions and, obviously, the discussion here in the House. She does listen and she is focused on improving the fiscal situation of this province, but, more importantly, making sure we're fully engaged in that process.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll pass it back.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further speakers to this motion?

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll talk a little bit about the bill and a few other issues, but I'll start with smoking. A good friend of mine who was a smoker said quitting was easy. He's done it hundreds of times.

I do remember it because I was never a smoker. I never smoked. My dad smoked, and I told this story before. He gave up smoking, but he never gave up tobacco. It was always chewing tobacco after that. Living with a person who chews tobacco is a whole other experience. That much I can tell you. Driving in the back seat of a car, definitely a whole other experience, especially if you're spitting out the window and it's coming into the back seat, Mr. Chair.

But at one time schools, think about it, the changes that have taken place with regard to that. At one time people smoked everywhere – airplanes, clubs, staff rooms. You would be sitting there for lunch and I can guarantee you'd be having smoke blown into your face by those who were smoking. That changed after a while because it became unpopular. I'm going to talk a little bit about that. I remember even with nightclubs, the whole thing about banning smoking in nightclubs. You might remember: It's going to drive us out of business because our paying customers are smokers. Guess what. It didn't. Nightclubs and that are thriving just as much as they ever were, thank you very much.

I do believe it's about more than just a tax. Yes, I understand where the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue comes from because in many ways, underlying every addiction, there is a mental health issue in some way. There is something there. Whether it's stress, anxiety, you name it, whatever else, it's helping either dealing with stress or we depend on it, whatever you want to call it. That's from a few of the school councillors I would speak to. You look at it being punitive, but at the same time, there's an opportunity here to take that money. I go back to the one on the tax on sugary drinks. It's how we're going to use that money.

At one time, the smoking rates among teenage boys decreased, primarily – I remember there was a study – because a lot of the anti-smoking

advertising was targeted towards them; smoking rates amongst females increased.

If we are going to tax this, people who probably can't afford it already, they're going to find ways of getting cigarettes in their hands. They already know. I think we, more or less, need to invest then – maybe in advertising, public awareness, you name it – to adopt a healthier lifestyle. That is going to be part of it. Just collecting the money itself is not going to be the total answer; it is going to be a help.

The other part I do want to talk about is the whole notion of change, because the attitudes toward smoking changed. If you look at any of the older movies, people smoked all the time. You look at any modern television show, movie, modern media, you don't see that. Well, you do see it creeping in; nevertheless the fact is that attitudes change; things change.

I want to transition, then, into the whole notion today about the petition that the Member for Torngat Mountains and I presented today on climate change. We asked several things here. The petition asked to declare a climate emergency, a task force on decreasing the effects of the climate crisis and to consider climate in all policy and decision making. Obviously, there is a move afoot that we cannot deny. Whether we want to deal with it or not, change is coming.

I'm old enough to remember, too, as I'm sure many others here are, when the first McDonald's came to Newfoundland and Labrador. It was on Topsail Road, at the corner of Cowan Avenue and Topsail Road. I know; I worked at the parks. It was almost a little bit too expensive at that time based on the minimum wage we were earning; nevertheless, that was the place to go.

You might remember, down the road many years later, when McDonald's served their food in Styrofoam boxes. I don't know if you remember why they stopped. They served them in paper, because at the time Styrofoam – holes in the ozone were appearing and it was traced to CFCs, which just didn't decay but they kept on destroying ozone. What started to happen was a groundswell of movement. People would go up to the wicket and ask for a hamburger wrapped in paper or a napkin, please. Thank you very

much. McDonald's was forced to change. It's now in cardboard boxes, recyclable. That whole movement changed the refrigerants in refrigerators and other devices. Basically, that action, that sudden swift action, McDonald's didn't have control over it, it was forced upon them and other agencies as well.

You've heard me speak about the need for a transition plan and I'm going to keep speaking for that because we do need to transition and we need to get ahead of this. We heard from my petition, 590, and there are about almost 3,000, I think, names between the petitions here and there are more coming. Let's get ahead of it. I think a key institution here that's going to be essential in making that transition is going to be our university, Mr. Chair. It is going to be a source of innovation and we need to support that in every way, shape or form.

It's interesting to note that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, certain Newfoundlanders at the time, would've had a big share in innovation, and I'm thinking of Dr. Cluny Macpherson, the inventor of the gas mask in World War I; a Newfoundlander and Labradorian. So we have the skill set here to make those changes and to get ahead of it.

When we look at taxes, to me, again, I look at taxes, too, as do you know what: What do we want out of life? What do we want in our society? Again, I'm referring to the drug plan that teachers have and other organizations have, and I refer to my colleague who said: It's better to raise the premiums than to cut the benefits.

It's interesting, I was talking to a friend of mine and one of his family members was diagnosed with a heart condition that's going to require – there's one drug that can be very useful, Mr. Chair, to basically save him. Sixteen thousand dollars a month – \$16,000 a month for this drug. Not \$1,600, but \$16,000. If you don't have insurance, and not all insurance plans will cover it, what are you going to do?

I look upon taxes the way I look upon insurance premiums in the plan. As another friend of mine would say: You can have any plan you want if you're willing to pay for it. That's the same thing with our taxes. What do we want? What

are the services we want? What are the benefits we want?

One of the things that I think a lot of people would want at the end of their lives is – especially for those who are unable to afford funeral services and that – a dignified and proper burial. I brought this up with the Minister of CSSD and he has referred to himself as, hopefully, the second honest John. We've had good conversations and I'm hoping he's going to be able to take care of this, Mr. Chair, which is in the St. John's area funeral homes are owed over \$200,000 because government has failed to pay for the funeral services of those who were on Income Support. It's the funeral homes who are picking it up.

I think in many ways when we're looking at paying taxes and that, it's about making sure that private industries are not necessarily left holding the bag, that they're treated fairly and that people who depend on services are also treated fairly.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker – or, Mr. Chair, I should say.

Glad to have the opportunity to carry on my conversation about the provincial election.

Mr. Chair, I talked about – as did my colleague for Humber - Bay of Islands, we talked about – the scrutinizing process for ballots and what an absolute joke that was, for sure. I talked about the computer system that was crashing. I talked about the phone lines that were down as much as they were up. We talked about senior citizens who may not have had a computer or iPhones to download IDs or even know how to do it.

Now, I want to move on to a few other things that apparently happened. Some of this, it's been out there. Some of this, admittedly, is hearsay, and that's the reason why there should be an investigation. That's the reason why there

should be an investigation to separate the facts from the myth.

But, one we know, because the Chief Electoral Officer himself admitted to the fact that he decided it was okay for him to personally start hand delivering ballots to certain select people. I don't know if they were friends, acquaintances; people in the neighbourhood, I think he said. I believe he hand delivered it to a couple of candidates, their ballots. I stand to be corrected, but I believe so.

So when everybody else, when all the normal mortals who are not friends and acquaintances and neighbours of the Chief Electoral Officer are trying to get ballots and can't get them, can't get through, being told someone is going to call you back, they don't call you back and so on, he's taking it upon himself to start hand delivering ballots to people he knows.

Now, I know that's probably not covered specifically in the Elections Act because, God only knows, that's not something that would ever be contemplated in anybody's rational mind, I don't think, but he did it. Now, whether he had a right to do it, whether it was right for him to do it, I don't know. It is a good question. I don't think it's right, personally. Maybe someone can show me I'm wrong and it is best kind, maybe it's fine. To my mind, if you're going to hand deliver it to everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador then that's fair and square, I suppose, but if you're just picking people you know and hand delivering ballots, I have to question it, Mr. Chair.

Voting over the phone: The Chief Electoral Officer himself went on the national media when this was brought up about voting on the phone, about what if we get people to vote by phone. And he said: If I tried to do that they'd make my head spin, it is against the Elections Act. He said that on the national media, it's against the Elections Act to vote by phone. Yet, he has admitted to the fact that he let certain people vote by phone. That is an outright breach that he has admitted too, but we want to sweep that under the rug and forget about it, like it didn't happen.

We've heard of people that voted in person, even though there was no in-person voting,

apparently there were some people that were able to go to the Elections NL office on the deadline and vote out in the parking lot or in the porch of the building or wherever they voted, or in their car or whatever they did. But there was no in-person voting, but there was people that got special permission – I don't know how they got special permission, I don't know what made them special. But, apparently, there were some more special people that got to vote on the deadline, apparently, at Elections NL, either in the porch or in their car or on the parking lot or whatever the case maybe. That's the allegation, that's the hearsay. We need an investigation to find out did it happen. If it did happen, what is the justification for allowing it to happen?

We also heard of allegations of – and this was allegations that came out from the Third Part I do believe, the NDP, and I believe their spokesperson when all this broke, again, I don't know if it's accurate or not; it's hearsay, hence, again, it needs to be investigated. But there were allegations that people were taking the ballot boxes home with them. Can you imagine?

Our process with the ballot boxes is they have to be locked up and they have to be sealed and locked up in secured places. I'm not sure of all the regulations but, basically, they have to be totally secured, sealed and locked up. The allegation – again, it's only an allegation – is that's all right, b'ys, take a few boxes home with you. Maybe you can get the kids to help you count. Maybe you can teach your kindergartener how to count more than 10. We can teach them by counting election ballots at your house over the supper table. I don't know if that's what happened, but that's the allegation, that they were taking ballot boxes home.

Then there was another allegation that people were able to email ballots. People were able to email ballots. Just type something up on the computer saying I'm going to vote for whoever and send me an email and that will do. We'll count that. Now, I don't know. I mean, it sounds ridiculous. A lot of these things sound ridiculous, but these are the allegations. I don't know if they're true or if they're not. But surely, God, when we're hearing all these things that are coming out here, I mean, you have to investigate it. You have to find out if it's true or not.

Then how about people getting ballots with no ID. If you go on election day, on a normal election, and you go in to vote, if your name is not on the voters list you have to show, I think, two pieces of identification – I could be wrong – but at least one and it has to have your address on it proving where you live. If you don't have that then you have to have someone else from the district to come and swear an oath that I know this person and I know this person lives at this address.

Apparently there were people who got ballots that just called on the line and said: Yeah, what's your name? Oh, such-and-such. Yeah, how many ballots do you want? I need one for my husband. Okay, no sweat. No ID required, no identification required. I mean, that's what we heard. Again, I know if you just listen to what I'm saying, all these things, you would listen to it and you would say: B'y, you don't know what you're talking about. This is foolishness. There is no way this stuff happened. But, apparently, these are the allegations.

If it's wrong, if what I'm saying is wrong, if all those allegations are false then let's investigate it. Let's find out and put it all to bed, put it all to rest. Put it all for rest. But for some reason we don't want to do that. We want to pretend like it didn't happen and move on. That seems to be the theme: Move on and get over it. It's over with now, move on. That's what they want. But there's a difference between what's right and what's wrong.

Everybody in this House got elected. I got elected. There's no reason for me to do this. There's no reason for me to bring this issue forward other than wanting to have the right thing done and to have confidence in the system. I won and I was elected, handily, and as were many people in this House. It doesn't make a difference to me. The outcome of any particular court challenge isn't going to make any difference to me either. I couldn't care less who wins, to be honest with you. No offence to anyone who's here. That's not my issue.

My issue is the difference between right and wrong. That we have an Elections Act that is supposed to be followed. We have it for a reason. We're living in a democracy. We're supposed to be setting a high standard for the

world. I know a former minister here in this House from years gone by, a PC minister, who has gone away all around the world showing them how to carry on elections and trying to teach people in other countries how to do democracy right.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who's that?

P. LANE: The name is eluding me. Geez, I know him.

AN HON. MEMBER: Brazil.

P. LANE: No, not Brazil. Not Brazil. Although he could do it – he could do it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Ross Reid.

P. LANE: Ross Reid. There you go, Ross Reid.

AN HON. MEMBER: A good man.

P. LANE: A good man. Yes, Ross is a good man. Yes –

AN HON. MEMBER: He wasn't a minister (inaudible).

P. LANE: I thought he was a minister at one point, but maybe I'm wrong.

Anyway, Ross is teaching people how to do elections properly in countries – training and so on. We're supposed to be that beacon of democracy, and why we can have all these irregularities happen and how we can somehow justify that it's okay.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Yeah, maybe Ross was a federal MP.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Yeah, okay, there you go. St. John's East, there we go.

Anyway, how we can hear all these irregularities and somehow justify in our mind that it's okay, forget about it, move on and we'll do better next time, is beyond me. I can't support it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further speakers?

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to have another few words on the election. I know there are people opposite attentively listening, Mr. Chair, to the speech. I know they're arguing because they know we're right. They know we're right, that's why. There are times you have to stand up. Even when you win you can't say: Okay, I've won, that's it, let's move on. You have to stand up and make people accountable for some of the actions.

I find it so strange. I just find it so strange. I go back to me, again, with Bruce Chaulk. Something happens, Bruce Chaulk does an investigation, brings it to the House and he can come to the House of Assembly. Yet we can't ask Bruce Chaulk – the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, sorry – we can't ask him to come to this House. I just want to point out something that I mentioned but the people don't catch on. It's strange. If you take the election, he broke the act, he gave numbers to the Liberal Party and he didn't give it to anybody else. The phone lines were down, which he finally admitted.

Do people in this House of Assembly know that he's the ethics Commissioner? He's the highest person in this land that can tell any of us here in this House that we broke the ethics. He's the actual ethics Commissioner. Here we are, we have a Commissioner for Legislative Standards who's the ethics Commissioner, he can run an election contrary to the Elections Act and have people who called in, people who faxed in or people tried online to get a ballot and can't get a ballot. Some who actually got a ballot and there was something different or wrong, it could be a different district on it or different names on it and he said everything went well – everything went well.

Mr. Chair, something that we always find is any time that – and I go through any Officer of this House of Assembly – if something happens they file a report on it. How come we haven't got a

report from the Chief Electoral Officer? It may take a bit more time. I don't know how long he has before he presents it to the House. As legislators, Members of the Legislature, we're the ones that oversee the legislation for an election, yet we cannot call that person to this House for some reason. There's some reason. I go back to history. There is some reason why someone is stopping him. There's some reason. I'm convinced. When you hear the Premier of this province saying: Well, he told me he's ready. He's ready for a COVID election. He's ready. Either that statement to the Premier was incorrect or the statement wasn't made.

How can the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, after all of the things that we heard in this House, after the frustration we got, honestly stand up and say the election went well? How can we, as Members of this Legislature, make a determination if the election went well when we don't know how many hours or days the phone lines or computers were down during that seven-day period? How many people did not receive a ballot after calling in and supposedly getting a ballot? How many people received ballots that were spoiled in some manner?

How can we say with people who faxed in – which I know personally we had to put a lot of pressure on them to get them accepted. How many other faxed ballots were in there – faxed applications of ballots never received? Above all, how can you allow an Officer of the House to take the act, throw it out through the window and not allow scrutineers into the room where there is counting?

I heard the Commissioner for Legislative Standards say it was COVID, for their protection. I said it earlier here tonight and I'll say it again, what happened to Zoom? We're all doing Zoom meetings; we had one the other morning with a briefing. How many people were on the Zoom meeting? You can't tell me – anybody in this room can't tell me – that the Commissioner for Legislative Standards couldn't set up a Zoom call if they were doing the Humber - Bay of Islands today for four hours, and have them show the ballots and show where they're putting the ballots.

It could have been done. If it wasn't done, what is the reason why it wasn't done? Who gives

him the authority? It's serious. This is just Humber - Bay of Islands, I know it happened all throughout the province. In Labrador, it was probably worse. In some communities, it was probably worse situations. When you have seniors, you're telling people to fax in or email your ballots and you couldn't do it; people on the line three and four hours.

I'll tell you something daunting to me, Mr. Chair. It was very upsetting, actually. How many people can remember when there was a second line put on? I emailed the Commissioner and do you know what I asked the Commissioner? I said, you have a second line on. Why don't you put a second line on for people outside the Avalon? I said they're waiting hours and hours online. Do you know what his response was to me in writing? Tell them to phone the other direct line.

So here is a person, say, from Corner Brook, Newfoundland, from Humber - Bay of Islands, call in, his own expense, wait on the line for two or three hours on the direct line to get a ballot, which is supposed to be free. The Commissioner for Legislative Standards, in writing, said to me: Tell them to call the other line. He wouldn't put a second line on. It's insulting for the people outside the Avalon.

You want to know the frustrations of the people and you want to know why I am so adamant with the Members opposite, that they don't want to call this person to this House of Assembly and answer these questions. We have no authority. Right now, without this government's approval, we have no authority to get to the bottom of the election. My God, we're almost getting back into the Third World somewhere.

I know he can't justify it all. It's impossible. He can't turn around and say the phones were open seven days when I know for a fact they weren't and he admitted it. I know he can't justify giving the number to the Liberal Party and no one else. I know he can't justify not allowing scrutineers, through Zoom, looking at the ballots. He can't justify it. I know he can't justify not putting on another line so more people could have voted outside the Avalon. I know that. It was so simple to do, but this man, this Commissioner for Legislative Standards, thinks he has the authority to do whatever he wants and take

people's rights away from this province. For us – and I'll say it to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety – to allow that to happen is disgraceful. It is actually disgraceful.

I don't know if a Member in this House of Assembly – I bet there is not one. I bet there is not one that scrambled the last day or two to call in to try to see if ballots were received or got calls saying we never received the ballot. I don't say there's one. I don't say there is one person here who can say: Well, I never got a call from a constituent who never received a ballot, or tried to get them faxed in, or tried to get them sent in right away to get a ballot. I don't think there is one because the whole election was chaotic.

It was chaotic. I said it before, Mr. Chair, in this House about another incident and I say it again: If we're going to empower the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, that he can take the act and throw it out through the window to do what's going to happen – I said it back then, who's next?

Do you know who's next, Mr. Chair? It was the people of Labrador who were refused and not given the opportunity to vote. That's who is next. There were so many seniors who couldn't vote, so many disenfranchised people who didn't have access to a phone or upload or download a picture. I warned it and that's exactly what happened. The voters of Newfoundland and Labrador were the ones who I said were next.

CHAIR: Order, please!

E. JOYCE: Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, this has dragged on for a while now. Out of respect, in particular for my colleagues on this side of the House who have been very patient, I appreciate the latitude and the agreement that we got from them all.

I'm not going to take the full 10 minutes but I just want to say that I think we made our point about the election. I think we made our point about the election, about the concerns that we had. I think we've made the point that we're not going to let this go. I think we've made the point that we're not going to be shut down and that if we ask questions, we expect answers. That was the intention because what happened in this election was absolutely ridiculous. It was absolutely ridiculous.

To have an Officer of the House – look, people can look at my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands who's had his issues with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards and say, oh, it's all sour grapes. I've had no issue with him – none. I don't really know the man. I talked him up a few times on some Committee work we did and whatever. I get my package from him every year about claiming your – conflict of interest form and all that kind of stuff. Other than that, I've had no dealings with him. I don't know him personally and I have no problem with him. It's not personal. It's certainly not personal for me.

But you have to remember this is an independent Officer of the House of Assembly, no different from the Auditor General, no different from the Seniors' Rep, the Citizens' Rep and the Privacy Commissioner. These are all independent Officers of the House that we have to hold to the highest standards. They all report to us. If things are not done properly, we have a responsibility to this House and the integrity of this House because it brings this whole House of Assembly – it questions the integrity of this House when Officers of the House are not acting properly and are not held accountable. It really does.

I believe, as my colleague said, it's really a neglect of duty on our behalf to not hold them to a higher standard and not to hold people accountable. To sweep this under the rug and to say, forget about it, that's it, we'll move on and do better next time: we're not doing our job. We're simply not doing our job.

I'll leave it at that, given the hour, and I thank everyone for their patience and I know it might have seemed like we were rambling on, which is perhaps somewhat normal for me and that's fine. I readily admit that from time to time. But when

it comes to issues, and as I said, a lot of the things that have gone on in this House of Assembly, including this budget, I supported. Remember that, I supported, so I'm not out to get you. I'm really not. I'm with you on more things than I'm not.

But on this particular issue, I guess we're going to have to agree to disagree. This is the one where I sort of dig in my heels and say, no, it is not good enough and I'm not going to pretend that it was okay because it wasn't okay. I am not going to let it go and I'm going to keep on bringing it up on every opportunity so that nobody can say: oh, I didn't know or it wasn't brought up. Oh, yes it is. So when you decide to ignore it, you'll be doing so with my voice in your head, I hope.

Anyway, with that said, Mr. Chair, I will conclude my comments on this bill and, by the way, I will be supporting the bill.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I'll just speak for one minute on this.

The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands mentioned that I had some dealings with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. I just want to make it quite clear, one of the reasons why I am pushing so hard on this is because of my dealings with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. It is because of it.

I can assure you, Mr. Chair, facts will speak for itself. That is why I know how information is put online. I know how information is not passed off. I know how statements in this House weren't true. I know how reports weren't true. That is why, Mr. Chair, I am pushing so hard my dealings with the Commissioner, not because it is personal.

I said this in this House of Assembly before, when I had my last speech back in October 2018, you were empowering this man and we did and look what happened in the election.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Any further speakers?

Going once, twice, three times.

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act." (Bill 13)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant-Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

On motion, long title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 13 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

This is carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. CROCKER: No.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 13.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 13.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Member for Lake Melville and Deputy Chair of Committees.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill, Bill 13, be introduced to give effect to the same.

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

When shall the report be received?

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

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

“That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on tobacco.”

On motion, resolution read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the resolution be now read a second time.

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

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

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

“That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on tobacco.”

On motion, resolution read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a resolution respecting the imposition of taxes on tobacco, Bill 13, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act, Bill 13, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

Motion, the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, “An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act.” (Bill 13)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 13)

On motion, Bill 13 read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that Bill 13 be now read a second time.

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

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 13)

On motion, Bill 13 read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 13 be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 13 now be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 13)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 13)

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 has been 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 stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

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