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*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

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The House met at 10 a.m.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Order, please!

**Government Business**

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, that notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, April 13, 2022, which so happens to be today, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. today for Routine Proceedings to conduct government business.

**SPEAKER:** 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.'

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

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

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

It is always an honour to stand, as so many of my colleagues have said, whenever we do get a chance to speak to represent our district. I am very proud to say I represent the District of Lake Melville in Central Labrador. It is a great honour and I look forward to continuing to represent those good people.

There are so many issues to speak about when we're talking about a budget today. I felt it most important, frankly, really to deal with life itself and the health care system, some of the challenges that we're having, some of the hopes that we have for the future. In particular, I wanted to focus on a couple aspects of it, one of which is the Medical Transportation Assistance Program.

This is one that I have spoken about several times, my colleagues standing here beside me from Labrador, we've also spoken about it; we've asked questions. There have been some improvements, but, frankly, Speaker, it has been and remains incredibly challenging for our district to deal with.

When you think about the provision of health care in any jurisdiction in our country, we're very proud of the fact that we have universal health care and if someone is sick, the state, the government, is there to support you and that you won't be left out in the cold, you'll actually be supported. But when it comes to living in the far-flung districts of our great province, such as in Lake Melville, Labrador, I can tell you it is incredibly frustrating, though, to see how this is actually implemented.

So the Medical Transportation Assistance Program is designed to support those who need to travel for medical services that they cannot procure, they cannot access in their own home community. And for Labrador, which is a three-day drive away or an extremely expensive airplane ticket, it is very frustrating to see the situations that we encounter on a day-to-day basis.

I can tell you, it is really a day-to-day basis. I need to again thank my constituency assistant Bonnie Learning, a very experienced CA – I call her the SACA, the super awesome CA – because she is, I would say, almost predominantly preoccupied with trying to find ways to get residents who need services here to St. John's or on occasion to Corner Brook or less frequently to St. Anthony.

What I wanted to do was talk about some examples just by way of why this is such a frustration and why, myself and my colleagues from Torngat Mountains and Labrador West, we

continue to get on our feet to speak to it. I'm just going to give a few examples.

First of all, I'm just going to outline some aspects of the program. So as a result of some improvement last year, constituents now who need to travel – if it's their first flight out, the first \$1,000 is covered and then 50 per cent of the expenses thereafter. If they choose to drive out, the first 500 kilometres now are deductible and thereafter there is government support for all those kilometres.

Remember, I said it's a three-day drive and/or an expensive airplane ticket and that also includes, of course, the situations where you may need to have an escort, depending on your medical condition and what kind of condition you're going to be in when you return from whatever treatment you're procuring.

I'm going to talk about a couple of examples just so I can underline what we are dealing with. I had Bonnie sketch some of these out for me. So I am going to read a little bit at verbatim.

Here's an example. We had a constituent who had a specialist appointment earlier this month. They did not have any private insurance so they had changed the appointment – get this, they had an appointment last year, so they had to change the appointment so they would have a 12-month gap since they last used the program to when they could avail of it again, because government will only provide you with your first trip out, that \$1,000 plus the 50 per cent.

So for them to be able to afford what it would cost them, they had to push their appointment out. Unfortunately, they informed Bonnie yesterday, informed our office yesterday, that even with the pushing this appointment out so that they could avail of it now, they find themselves still unable to pay the difference. Can you imagine?

So guess what they have done? They've cancelled the appointment. They are not coming from Lake Melville to St. John's for medical treatment because they can't even afford the difference.

Now this is where I could really get mad because – and I don't want any anger or sarcasm

or cynicism to be levelled at any of the people that we deal with. I can tell you the folks in the Medical Transportation Assistance Program are fantastic. They have gone above and beyond the call of duty so often.

For example, some of the issues that we encounter sometimes when you're making an application is you need 10 business days. Well, guess what? People often encounter a medical condition that doesn't tell you 10 days from now you're going to need to be seeking financial support. This particular situation is such that they couldn't even avail of the trip so they have pushed this out and they've had to cancel the specialist appointment. They just let us know that.

Another senior constituent was medevaced to St. John's last year for cardiac care.

I've learned so much about the health care system and I have often mentioned that I feel all of us in this room, frankly, need to have a primer, probably as important as any orientation in this Legislature, for how the health care system works; how we make decisions; how things are keyed up; how the regional health authorities all work together, by the way.

Because as many of us know – and I bet I can look around the room now – if you have represented anybody with a cardiac condition, with the exception of the urban MHAs, but if you represented anyone with a cardiac condition, you know there is a daily triage that involves – you might have had a heart attack, for example, but guess what? You may not be in serious enough condition that you need to be medevaced immediately down here to St. John's for that treatment. So you could be stacked up, just much like coming into Heathrow, with a bunch of planes circling around the end location, sitting in a bed in Happy Valley-Goose Bay at the Labrador Health Centre for up to four weeks, I think, are some of the records that I've encountered. Somebody with a cardiac condition waiting to get up into the queue. It is a strange twist of fate when you often see a situation where you're sick, but not sick enough to jump to the front of the queue. Talk about frustrating.

So here is an example; this person was a cardiac patient and they actually had a very serious

situation. They were medevaced here to St. John's. When they were released they were actually in pretty good shape, but guess what? They did not have the financial means to return back to Happy Valley-Goose Bay. So they find themselves stranded.

Now, we can still avail of the MTAP system, but this is where I was going with my thought earlier. You require 10 business days to apply. So you wake up in the morning and you're in a hospital bed. The great folks here at the Health Sciences Centre say: Okay, you can be discharged today. You're good to go. Well, guess what? We are not going to help them get back to Labrador. The MTAP is there, but to apply for the financial support for them to go back they need to wait 10 business days. It just defies the logic in some of the policy aspects.

We do have air ambulances, when they're working, with a crew, a pilot and a plan that is available that could go back. It is just some coordination here could save so much heartache, so much financial struggle that so many of us deal with.

This is another one that I'll speak about. A constituent who has myriad health issues that requires visits with multiple specialists, including oncologists; no private insurance; has used MTAP several times since 2021 to get to specialists appointments; struggles to pay copay amounts at expense of going without other necessary things, such a delaying bills. It is literally a matter of life or death to get to the appointments.

I do not know how this woman keeps a smile on her face. She is from Labrador. She is trying to remain in Labrador. She requires attention here in St. John's. We are constantly helping her with her expense claims, her applications. She is literally scraping cash together, and she's fighting for her life. This is the kind of stuff that pulls us down right into the personal connection with our constituents. And while we feel we can help them, we can't solve these amazing problems. Again, I know the minister well. I know he's doing his best, but I've got to say there's just so much more that needs to be done.

Here's another example of another senior constituent, medevaced out to St. John's for

cardiac care. He was able to get back on his own, but the fact that three of the four constituents outlined here were left to essentially their own devices once discharged speaks to this great flaw in the medical and MTAP system.

You know, I'm going to point out, because I've heard the Leader of the Official Opposition say this on many occasions and I've heard that party say on many occasions – I've been tinkering and lobbying hard, can we get some additional dollars for this, can we do some things like that – I've heard the Opposition say this should be 100 per cent covered. And I'm with you. I am so with you now. It is time –

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

**P. TRIMPER:** What are we doing here? I get it. I know that after I sit down, others will speak – and I watched the news last night. We are dominated now with doctors, medical professionals leaving our rural parts of our province. One way that we can solve this is, again, if we can't get the services delivered in our districts, let's get the people who need those services to where they are. We shouldn't have to pay for that.

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

**P. TRIMPER:** We are paying for it.

One more I want to mention, just to lay it on. And it's the emotional connection that we feel. There's a woman and I've spoken about her in the past; it was on a petition last year. She was fighting cancer. Because of her condition, it wasn't appropriate for her to fly. It was better for her to drive. Her MTAP claim, when she drove from Happy Valley-Goose Bay to Forteau, stayed in a hotel, crossed with the ferry, drove again a good chunk of the day, another seven or eight hours, stopped for a hotel before she and her husband got to St. John's – guess what?

That hotel room in Forteau was clawed back. The thinking is that somehow we are able to drive from Happy Valley-Goose Bay – and I look to my colleague from Labrador West, which is another day's drive, so it's the better part of a four-day trip for constituents from his area. Somehow we're going to have people that are in a very compromised health condition be

able to drive such that they can stay in a hotel one night and then get to St. John's.

Anyway, I just found this such a slap in the face. She and her husband came to my office. I know them both quite well. We inquired and, unfortunately, the claim was denied for that other hotel room, that other hundred-and-a-few dollars. And I'm just thinking how tragic it is.

Unfortunately, she died. She died just a few months ago. I know her husband very well. I just watch him grieving. I see this guy a couple of times a week and every time I do, I see that same response back, that we were not able to at least cover that additional hotel room, that somehow they were going to drive through the night to be able to make their appointment.

Air ambulance ties closely to this. I see some reference to some announcements, some moves on the air ambulance system. That's why I asked the question yesterday. I think, according to the minister's response, he is still waiting to hear from the Health Accord. So many of us are speaking about this Health Accord that Sister Elizabeth and Dr. Pat Parfrey have been co-chairing. I think everyone in this room remains hopeful that we will see a new and imagined health care system.

One of the items that myself and my colleagues have been speaking about, and we even had a press release last December, was the need for a close examination of the air ambulance system. Some of the aspects of it, I'm seeing reference to in the budget. I look forward to Estimates when, hopefully, we'll learn more, and/or more will roll out as a result of the Health Accord.

We came up with four clear recommendations last year. I wanted to table them again here on the floor to remind everybody what we are looking for in Labrador and rural parts of Newfoundland. And that is to very much simplify this system. We've got three government entities right now running the program.

The first recommendation was to establish a single entity of government to oversee and operate the entire organization, staff coordination and budget. Appoint a single authority for air and ground ambulance within

the same entity of government. I see reference to that in the budget and I applaud the government for listening on that. That's a great thing.

We have a situation where the air ambulance is based in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. We provide coverage but only for half of the day. So what happens is, if we have a call-out – again, these medical emergencies are not scheduled, we don't know when they're coming, but if they happen to occur late in the day of a shift, the pilots are not able to respond because they will be duty timed out. So that means that we then have to avail of the private sector – glad they're there. However, we now have to bring – because we don't have the government run, government operated response team, we are now availing of a third party to respond. So we're paying for pilots, medical flight crew, planes that are on the ground at Goose Bay and now we're also having to pay for a third party.

This is why the budget, for example, just a year or so ago, was some \$6 million for the government run operation, but another, \$4 million to avail of a third party. So yours truly and others have been arguing: Lets get another crew, another plane leased, we don't have to own it, established in Gosse Bay so we have 24-7 coverage from which we can respond back down.

I can remember former MHA John Hickey, this was one of his pet peeves and he pushed hard to actually get some presence on the ground in Labrador. Unfortunately, what happened was he could only get it half done and what it has meant is additional expense. I'm suggesting we could probably spend, I don't know, \$1 million to save another \$3 million. This is some of the orchestra conducting I'm often speaking about.

Finally – and I can tell you and I know my colleagues are going to speak to this as well today – we have real-life experiences, one here this morning – and I'll let him speak to it – he's been waiting for a medevac since Sunday. They've just gotten on a plane this morning to come here to St. John's. The doctors have deemed it urgent, that plane is only getting in – and I'm not confident as to what the exact cause is, but I'm aware that the plane and the pilots have been sitting in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, I can only surmise that, again, the medical flight

team from St. John's was not available until this morning.

I wish this patient the best. But, again, I just see so many flaws in the system. I'm hoping that we can find some way forward.

I want to take my last two minutes to speak to another matter that is a little bit beyond the control of government but I have heard reference to it and I feel we all need to apply pressure.

I often joke, but I am telling you I'm only joking sarcastically, when I fly down to St. John's, I've got a one-out-of-three chance – I'm kind of keeping track because I always like to talk to the taxi drivers – that driver is going to be an engineering student, or an engineer, for example, from Libya, driving a taxi because the professional association does not recognize his engineering credentials.

Guess what? I see the same thing in the medical system. There's a woman, she's a nurse, she's got a nursing degree; she's worked in two other countries as a professional nurse. The only work she can get now in Labrador is as a personal care attendant. We do not recognize her nursing credentials.

Her only option to become a nurse, as she is doing in her career, is she's been told to go back to school. Well, as I sit and listen to so many of my colleagues talk about the loss of medical professionals, I look at the complete frustration of and lack of support from our professional organizations, I just have to ask you: What are we thinking?

Ontario has recently come up with a strategy to actually provide a mentoring program for positions such as nurses and new Canadians. I've been asking government to see if we can make some progress on that. I'd really like to see it. The solution is before us, let's stand back and look. I can only say a little prayer that the Health Accord is going to bring us some better direction. The unfortunate thing is they're talking about 10 years from now they'll have it in place – we need it now.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure to speak today and to represent the people of Labrador West. It's very interesting, my colleague behind me mentioning issues that are almost mirrored to a lot of what we face in Labrador West. If you ever break down Labrador into its four districts, all four districts are unique in their own individual way, but for the most part, a lot of the stuff when it comes to health care and medical travel and air ambulance are almost identical.

It's interesting to talk to people from different parts of the province and we have to explain to them, well, health care is not free in Labrador. It costs an arm and a leg to fly out of Labrador and a lot of people don't have the money in their back pocket to go out, especially if something is unexpected.

And it's interesting that the Member from Lake Melville actually mentioned the exact situation that happened to me when my first daughter was born. I was just starting out as a tradesperson and we were expecting our first child. We were only young. My wife goes to see her OB/GYN and she looked at her and said, oh, there are issues. We're calling the air ambulance for you right now. Let your family know. So I was at work and I got a call. I had to get on a plane. My wife was on her way out to St. John's – future wife – because there were complications with the pregnancy.

We'd just bought a house and I didn't have two cents to rub together, and now we had this unexpected bill. I had to get on a plane and spend \$1,000 on a flight, a last-minute flight out to St. John's. My wife was air ambulated out. When we got to St. John's they told us, yeah, we corrected it for now, but you're going to have to spend the rest of your term in St. John's. We can't send you back to Labrador, there's no one there to look after you.

We had to spend two weeks – I didn't have two cents to rub together, I'd just bought a house – to wait for the birth of our first child. There were no supports at the time. MTAP was non-existent then. That was 2009-2010. It was basically a

non-existent program. All fine and dandy, so we had to find a place to stay. Luckily enough I had an uncle that lived out here and we waited two weeks for the birth of our daughter.

Then, when we were discharged, there was nothing, they just said, well, good luck, back to Labrador for you. Thankfully my parents looked after our flights back to Labrador. Honestly, I think they did it for their granddaughter not for me. But at the end of the day that's what happens to Labradorians when they're discharged from a hospital here in St. John's. Good luck to you. All the best.

MTAP is a failed program. There's no doubt about it. It only covers basically one trip. If you have cancer, well, you know you get one trip from MTAP; everything else is on you. If you're sent out on an air ambulance and you're discharged from the hospital here, there's a waiting period for MTAP, 50 per cent recovery. You could be discharged at any day, so you're stuck in St. John's even longer waiting to get the money to pay for 50 per cent of your flight back to Labrador. And with the increasing and increasing cost of flights because of inflation and the cost of living, that's \$600 or \$700, it's 50 per cent of a flight right now, potentially a last-minute flight.

So, in reality, health care is not free, it's not universal and it's not equal or equitable. It costs money and it comes out of the pockets of people in this province right now. It's embarrassing. It's absolutely embarrassing how we are being treated as Labradorians.

We understand we're not going to get a PET machine or we're not going to get all this gear that they have in St. John's. We understand that. We know that, in Labrador, there's a limit to what we can have. We understand. There are only 30,000 of us. But, every year, less and less and less services are being provided for Labrador and the stuff that we've had since Grenfell, we've lost. And now we're being forced more to fly to St. John's to get health coverage. And, in some cases, things are basic.

So more and more people are required to fly and, therefore, more and more people are having to pay out of their own pocket to receive what would normally be a drive for most people in

this province, a drive to their local health care centre. At some point, it's going to drain people, and it has drained people. I have known people who have mortgaged their house so their child can get cancer treatment. I've known people who ate up their entire retirement savings because a loved one had a heart attack.

Those are the kind of realities that we're facing where we are. We talk about the economic prosperity of mining and how much we've contributed to the province that way, but we haven't gotten back anything in return. We're only asking to be treated equally in this province; we're only asking for what everyone else has. We're not asking for the moon; we're just asking to be treated equally. We deserve the same type of health care that anyone else in this province receives and that's all. That's all we're asking for, but we haven't received it. We haven't even gotten close to it, especially in the last, I'd say, 10 years.

I'll give you a good example. My sister, right now, is here in St. John's. She was told to wait a month because of her child – because of complications with pregnancy. So she has to take a month of her life. She had to find an apartment. She's out here now waiting, going back and forth to the Health Sciences Centre. She will not be reimbursed, other than her flight out here, through MTAP, basically. If she can get through the paperwork, because that's another embarrassing thing in itself. But now my brother-in-law is flying back and forth between working in the mine in Labrador and out here to look after his wife. This is embarrassing that this is what we've come to. We're just asking for fair and equal treatment when it comes to being where we are.

I know in the past some Members on the government side said, well, you choose where you live. Well, I have the right to choose where I live and I live in my homeland, which is Labrador. My family has been there. My daughter is the fourth generation to live there now. On the other side of it, my wife's family has been there forever and a day, as an Indigenous woman. But we're Labradorian, this is where we live and we're not going anywhere. Most Labradorians have the same sentiment. This is home; this is where we live. We're supposed to be a part of this province. It is

supposed to be Newfoundland and Labrador, so if we just have that tad bit of respect to be equal in this union.

The economic outlook for Labrador, on the other side of it, is great. We're one of the only regions in Canada that was not affected economically by the pandemic. We actually grew significantly during the pandemic. They did a census. Labrador West, for the first time in many years, has actually grown its population. We're actually cracking the 10,000 mark now. So we're growing, expanding but our services are diminishing. We have less health care services, we have less other government services, we can't keep teachers, we can't keep doctors and we can't keep nurses. It is not keeping pace with the economic development.

We all know we can never keep up with the wages in the trades and mining and all that but at least try. At least try to accommodate, at least try to make it viable for these people and these professionals to even bother to look at Labrador as a place to come live. The biggest hurdle right now is housing. We don't have enough houses to house anybody. We don't have enough opportunities for developers to even put in a subdivision because they have no confidence in doing so. At this day, the government does even seem to be interested in providing that confidence to developers.

It is funny that most people think mining, eventually this town is going to go. There is 200 years of ore left in the ground to be mined – 200 hundred years. Iron is the base metal for all construction right now. What more confidence do you need? We've never waived. We've been mining – we've been digging ore out of the ground for 365 since 1954. The government should understand that we're not going anywhere. We're not a temporary place. We exist, we'll always exist and without the confidence Treasury of this province. And not one ounce of respect has been ever given to the people of Labrador West and the seniors that live there – not one bit of respect. And this is absolutely embarrassing.

It's shocking and embarrassing that, right now, seniors are living in conditions that they can no longer live in. They are living with no care – they can't get home care, there's no personal

care home and there's a wait-list for long-term care. By the time they get to long-term care, it's too late. If they had the care beforehand, they could have more meaningful lives, they could enjoy their golden days and they could enjoy everything that they got. But they got nothing. And if they want it, guess what? You're shipped 1,000 kilometres to the Island to a community you don't know and you get to see your family once a year because it costs a grand each for your family to fly out and see you. So it's absolutely embarrassing where we're to right now.

And this is not a new ask. MHAs before me have asked for this. MHAs after me will probably, unfortunately, have to ask this but it shouldn't be this way. You can correct it now and you should correct it now.

This is not how we should be treating people. We should not be forcing them to go through massive amounts of bureaucracy to get a couple of dollars back for medical travel. We shouldn't have to beg for something for our seniors – the people who have put billions and billions and billions of dollars into the Treasury of this province. We shouldn't have to ask for it like this.

It should be at least a gesture of goodwill for all the hard work that these people have done. Trust me, people have paid with their lives to dig that ore out of the ground. Many of these people who are widows now, looking for this care, the majority of their spouses have died of industrial disease, from asbestosis, from silicosis and from workplace accidents. These people – some of them – gave their lives to put billions and billions of dollars into the coffers of this province and the least you could do is have a place for their widows to actually live in dignity and that's what it's (inaudible), Sir.

Now, the Member for Lake Melville mentioned air ambulance. That's another gripe that Labradorians have faced. We've actually had some recommendations; we actually gave the government ideas on something to correct a lot of the situation.

The first one is we need a third King Air. There needs to be a third plane for this province that



actually is ready and available when one is down.

**P. TRIMPER:** With a crew.

**J. BROWN:** With a crew, with a full complement of everything it needs to go with it. That was a recommendation from a report to government about our ambulances. This is not just something that myself and my colleagues from Labrador pulled out of thin air. This is from a government report that told them that this is what you need to do. That's the thing.

And the service out of Goose needs to be 24 hours. It's most logical to put it in Goose Bay. It's an Air Force Base. It was purposely put there because of the weather and the conditions to service over the North Atlantic.

Well, guess what? Because of that, it's great for servicing the rest of Labrador and the thing is if you're not going to actually put the services in Labrador to treat people, at least have an air ambulance for us to get out when we need to get out instead of waiting sometimes weeks to try to get out because there's no crew available. There are no pilots available. The plane is down for maintenance. The list goes on and on. This is an emergency service and it needs to be available when called upon.

Now, I understand there are times with beds and stuff like that, too, but, at the same time, you shouldn't have to wait a week. That's embarrassing people; wait a week for an air ambulance to come get somebody. Absolutely embarrassing to say the least.

We don't have the medical services in Labrador that the majority of the province actually has. So there is only so much that these professionals in Labrador can do. They need the backup of the Health Sciences Centre. That is unfortunately the situation we're in, having them, for the most part, stuck for a week waiting.

And do you know what? It is going to cost more down the road because the longer you're waiting for specialty treatment – we all know – the longer you wait, the more damage is done. This is the unfortunate part about it. The reason why we actually have the air ambulance in Labrador is because someone died waiting for the air

ambulance – that needlessly died of an industrial accident. Labrador is an industrial areas, it happens. These things happen and people shouldn't have to pay with their lives. That's what's happening.

We could do better, we should do better and we have the ability to do better, so do better. At the end of the day, I shouldn't have to get up here and talk about this stuff. This is just stuff that should be happening, should be in the minds of all.

It's about choices. We all have to make choices, we understand that, but the choices that should come first are the choices about people. Everybody in this province should live in safety and comfort because that is what a society does; we look after each other. But at this point in time, with the cost of living and things have just been absolutely spiraling out of control, people are worried. People are not getting their medications. People are not going to the dentists. People are not going to their regular appointments. What it is going to do is we're going to create a system where there is going to be so much medical need that it is just going to be like when the dam bursts, because we are putting way too much stuff off.

Right now, it's starting with the seniors. Those who actually can't afford their drugs, can't afford to get dentures, can't afford to get their prescriptions for their eyeglasses, things like that. These people are not living in comfort. These people are not living in safety and security. These people can barely keep a roof over their heads right now. They're all on fixed incomes. And this is the problem. We need to be looking after people a lot better than what we are now.

You know, it's great, the federal government is going to bring out working on pharmacare, working on dental care and stuff like that. But where are we? Shouldn't we be up in Ottawa right now saying we want to sign on to these pilots, we want to be the first ones to do it? No, I don't see that. This House, on our PMR, voted unanimously about a basic income or a pilot project that's about reducing poverty.

PEI did it after us. They saw what we did and they went after us. Well, guess what? They're

already up in Ottawa with a letter asking for a pilot to be done there. They beat us to the punch. It was our idea, but they beat us to it. That's another embarrassing moment for us right now. We should have been the ones up in Ottawa right now negotiating a pilot to end poverty in this province.

Do you know what the sad part about it is? Poverty is actually increasing. There's more and more and more people falling behind right now.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is expired.

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

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

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

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

One of the things I just wanted to mention first that I wasn't going to speak about – I always include things that I didn't plan to talk about – was the announcement for the three schools. One of the communities that was identified as needing a new school was Cartwright.

I grew up going to sports tournaments, I've got relatives that live in Cartwright, and I've got to say how tremendous that news was, not only to the people of Cartwright but for people that know residents in Cartwright – badly needed.

The school was built in the 1960s. I think that school is older than me, and I got to tell you, Speaker, I'm ancient. I'm nearing 60. I actually think I'm 57, I'm not quite sure; I may be turning 58 or I might be turning 57, I'm not sure. The way I deal with it is I don't keep track. I rely on my brother because –

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

**L. EVANS:** – my brother gets more alarmed about how old I am because he's older than I am.

But, Speaker, built in the 1960s, I hate to say it, but it's shameful. It's shameful that people in

this day with all the needs being put on students, all the demands being put on students that we actually have a community of Cartwright that has a school that was built before a lot of us were even born.

Just hearing people talk on the radio this morning about how excited they were because of the safety issues. Can you imagine the wiring and the infrastructure that was put in place in the 1960s? Very, very dated. Also, accessibility for students and people being able to participate. A grandmother not being able to go to her granddaughter's high school graduation because she doesn't have the mobility to be able to get into the school.

So the Cartwright school was badly needed. As pleased as everyone is about this, I think it's time that we step back and say why did it take this long. Now the concern is we hope this doesn't get dragged out for the next eight to 10 years. We hope we can have our school built in a timely fashion. Why would residents be thinking that?

Because that it is the pattern. Things get announced and then there's delay after delay. We just look at the \$200,000 that was announced three budgets ago for the prefeasibility study to have the North Coast be tied into the Trans-Labrador – delay after delay. We look at the Health Accord; is this going to be another delay? Are there going to be issues with that? It is very, very concerning.

When you look at Labrador, one of the things – you talk to anyone who's been born and raised in Labrador and they'll say we're out of sight, out of mind. It doesn't matter if you're from Lab West, from Torngat Mountains, Lake Melville region, or even the South Coast. When my fellow MHA from Lab West was speaking, and he was talking about seniors needing nursing homes, seniors needing houses, he speaks on those issues every chance he gets in this House of Assembly.

But if you look at his district: iron ore, lifespan of another 200 years. When you look at all the monies that Lab West has contributed to provincial revenue. When you look at Voisey's Bay, in my district, the mining – nickel, cobalt, copper, all in demand; it's going to be in

demand for many years. What saved the province financially when there was a downturn in oil? It was mining. Where are the mines? Up in Labrador.

So why should we have to actually draw attention to these problems that we face every day, that impact our quality of life? My fellow MHAs talk about that. Talk about the need for Labrador to have a voice. Most people who message me talk about separation. Now, I'm trying to not engage on that level, but I have to say when we've been treated as poorly as we've been treated.

The North Coast, my district, we have the most children in care. Look at our incarceration rates into prisons and the correctional facilities. When you look at that, that's a product of intergenerational trauma. Our people weren't born like that. Our people were born happy, little children. What happened? What happened is cycle after cycle after cycle where we were harmed, initially, back in the day and it was never addressed. And even now when people know the issues, they don't want to hear about it because of the way our provincial government is set up. It is set up to be self-serving.

Every MHA here has a vested interest in getting elected. Every MHA here has a vested interest of when they go into their communities, when they go into a store, they want their residents to pat them on the back and say thank you for that. Thank you for talking to Dr. Haggie, individually, in the House of Assembly and bringing forth my medical issue. As MHAs, we should be looking at a bigger picture. We should be looking at the greater good of the province and that's not happening.

The way we're set up is to be self-serving. You know that. Everybody knows that here and that's a big problem. In Labrador – I keep saying we have three MHAs – we have four MHAs out of 40. But when you look at our need for services, our need for infrastructure, we don't get our fair share. On the North Coast, we don't get anything. I can have the MP get on *Labrador Morning* and say what I said was incorrect about the Internet and they spent a couple of million of dollars, so I'm wrong. But you want to know something? I'm not wrong. When you look at how much money was spent on the Internet

services and maintenance for the District of Torngat Mountains compared to the rest of Labrador it is very, very small.

The reason why this government is not set up properly is even for the region of Labrador, there's a tendency to put MHA against MHA, and that's the failure. The only way we can get ahead is if we unite and work together. Do you know something? The way this is working out, that's not going to happen because there are too many self-serving people getting elected and re-elected and elected and elected and elected.

The joke was, to me, oh, you got off on the eighth floor – I got off accidentally. The joke was about all the media there. Why would there be a joke in the House of Assembly about the eighth floor and media? Because this government governs by controlling what people think. As long as people think they're doing a good job, they're going to get re-elected. They're going to have the public support. Social justice is gone out the window. It has not gone out the window; it was never in the House. It was never here. I don't think it was from the Joey days up to the Peckford days, continuing on government to government, I don't think there has been any social justice here.

Why should I take my budget time to talk about that? Because my people have been harmed the most with this political system. That is why I have to agree with most people that message me and say: You know something, Lela, is there any way we could separate? I'm pretty interested in that, seriously.

Looking at the Health Accord now, I am really, really concerned. I could stand up here and complain about the process of the Health Accord and the lack of consultation but, at the end of the day, if I want my district to benefit from improvements in health, I cannot. What I have to do is I have to support what is in the Health Accord. What I have to do is I have to fight to try and protect the unity of the Health Accord, because the Health Accord is basically a plan, a program and a system that calls for the components to be all implemented. Not to allow this government to – and I use the word cherry-pick pieces that goes in line with Moya Greene's recommendations. Because what will happen

then is we're going to have the same old, same old.

We're going to have people dying in Labrador, waiting to be medevaced out. We're going to have people on the North Coast dying, being diagnosed too late or being incorrectly diagnosed. For us, as Labradorians – South Coast, how many crisis did we have where people have actually been delayed? How many crisis did we have in Labrador West where medical assistance was delayed? In Lake Melville? And on the North Coast it happens practically all the time because on the North Coast we are dependent on weather.

I have to say that the road that would connect us to the Trans-Labrador Highway helps us with access to medical care; helps us to access to quality of food, reasonable prices for food; building materials; infrastructure – everything. Right now – I was talking to the Minister of CSSD this summer about Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units need to be repaired. The biggest burden we faced was timelines. They never got the inspections done in time. They never got the contracts in time, so they never got the building materials up there.

We have a housing crisis but also we have, at the root of it all, a transportation crisis. That is something that this government could be helping us with. And they're not. In 2019, they took away the freight boat that actually came from the Island that keep our prices reasonable for our communities. But no one cares.

Actually, the person who is talking over me right now spent over \$11 million in transportation when he was minister in one year. And I can't get a prefeasibility study done. I don't even know if they have the –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** \$200,000.

**L. EVANS:** Right, \$200,000. Correct me because I get so mad, I get the numbers confused.

Talking about the Health Accord now. This morning on the radio people were talking about health care being in crisis. What was said, and I quote: What shocks one community is normal to another. That was said regarding health care.

One community dealing in crisis out in rural Newfoundland, on the Island.

Talked about the shortage of doctors. Where the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association calls on the provincial government, and I am quoting, "... to immediately implement a plan to rescue rural health care centres that are in crisis." That is the president talking. That is their press release I am quoting from, "... rescue rural health care centres that are in crisis."

I heard my fellow MHA for Harbour Main on the radio this morning talking from a past interview and she was very upset and concerned, not only for her district but for all of rural Newfoundland and Labrador and I compliment her on that. She is a very passionate MHA. I wrote down what she said: People are dying because they are not getting a proper diagnosis. They are not being able to get diagnosed and therefore the proper treatment is delayed. So do you know what happens? People die.

We on this side of the House know that. We understand the value of that Health Accord. Saying that there is a delay in rollout of 10 years, but that doesn't give you an excuse just to cherry-pick and save money at the expense of us all.

Looking at access to timely medical care. I've been talking about that since I got elected in 2019. Not only can we not see the doctors – actually, this winter, during the election, my second election within two years, people in Makkovik, the issue that they brought up is that there hadn't been a doctor to Makkovik, to the community of Makkovik, in over two years. They hadn't seen a doctor. If I talk about health care on the North Coast, people will talk about people who've died. I've had people that died. I've had relatives, close personal friends that died, and we can look and see that they weren't diagnosed quickly enough, the treatment they had was too late.

Most people on the North Coast is diagnosed with stage 4 cancer or glaucoma – blind, partially blind. One of the greatest leaders out of the community of Makkovik actually was blinded by glaucoma. And do you know something? The problem with being diagnosed

too late with glaucoma is the damage is permanent.

The problem with me trying to get up and speak without having notes in front of me is I go off on tangents, because I'm talking about glaucoma. Now, let's talk about cataracts.

So that's a big thing, cataracts. Well, do you know something? On the North Coast, we didn't have to live with people being blinded from cataracts; we were living with people who were blinded because of failure to deliver proper surgeries. My grandmother was one of them. Luckily, she only had her cataract removed in one eye in St. Anthony, and they blinded her.

Everybody knows Burt Winters in Makkovik. He passed away recently, he was in his 90s; he used to go out hunting and fishing. He was a very strong, physically fit man. But everybody knew he had a damaged eye. Where did that happen? St. Anthony. I could go around the community and find the people that were blinded. I think what they knew is that doctor was incompetent and that's the reason the surgery was only done in one eye. Because you'd only be blind in one eye.

There was a lady there, a few months older than my grandmother, she wasn't blind in one eye because her family actually paid for her to go to St. John's and get the surgery.

The thing about it is, in Canada, when we look at the provinces in Canada, we think that everyone has equal access. We don't have equal access.

Now, what about access to health care on the North Coast? If you can get an appointment at the clinic, and if the clinic agrees that your condition is serious enough to be sent out – and a lot of the time the delay happens there, where you have a serious medical condition that could damage your organs, or lead to your untimely death – there's a delay in getting you out. If you're lucky enough to actually get that appointment in Goose Bay, you're still not free and clear to actually have access to health care – adequate health care. You have to get there.

Now, even if the weather is good – we have no roads connecting us – so we have to fly. Even if

the weather is good and you can fly, there might not be room on the flight. Seriously. I have had people now – so who gets bumped off? Eye appointments, glaucoma, cataracts – early detection. Everybody talks about early detection now for eye care and what happens if you loses your vision or your vision is impacted? It affects your quality of life and especially of our elders we see, they lose their independence.

Physiotherapy from a major surgery. You've got your hip replaced, your knee replaced or you might have had a huge surgery and you need physio. You don't actually get the physio after the surgery. You're basically sent home and then they'll make an appointment for you. Then usually that appointment is rescheduled, rescheduled, rescheduled so that people, when they actually access physiotherapy, it's not to help them recover from the surgery, it's basically to help them overcome the scar tissue and damage that's been done in the wait. A lot of people don't actually even get that physiotherapy. So you look at our elders going around and you even look at a lot of our young people, you can tell that they have a disability and the disability is caused by the failure of them to have access to physiotherapy.

Dental: Don't get me started on dental. It's not about dentures. It's about people being able to access good quality health care by actually being able to see a dentist in a timely fashion. Right? That doesn't happen.

Access to air ambulance: that's what we talk about in Labrador. We need to be able to – if somebody's life depends on it – fly from Labrador to St. John's to be saved. And what happens is – both my fellow MHAs here can attest – we usually find out that the air ambulance is not available when somebody, who's an advocate for somebody who's really sick and their life is at stake or they're overall health care and their quality of life in the future is at stake and they can't actually get transportation. We've witnessed that because we have access to the tracking of the air ambulance flying all around the Island, flying back and forth the Island, but not going to Labrador.

One of my friends was over in Lab West, supposed to be medevaced out, ended up on life-support. Why was he over in Lab West? There

were no beds in Goose Bay and none in St. Johns, originally, when they tried to transport him. So now he ends up on life-support. He's in Lab West and they're trying to get him to St. John's.

The MHA got involved; that's me –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is expired.

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

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

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

It's an honour to stand in this House again and speak to the budget. Ironically, I've been reflecting on budget processes and I went back and found one from 1986 that I still had, that I had some relevance and connection to. This is my 40th budget as somebody either directly or indirectly connected. And I know somebody who looks like they're in their 30s –

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

**D. BRAZIL:** – could have had 40 budgets underneath their belt, but it is true. I had the privilege in my late teens to work as part of a Crown corporation and one of the issues were to be cognizant of budgets and be in this House – it wasn't even here at that time; it wasn't in this design at the time – and every year to go through every budget.

And I've seen them from every genre. I've seen them from every administration. I've seen ones that we were in awe that there were so many good things coming out and it hit the mark, and there were ones that you shook your head in disbelief to say what's happened here, did they totally miss the mark, were they not listening, as part of that process. I'm not going to label this one as either one of those. What I will label it is \$8 billion being spent – and I give credit; a budget is never an easy thing to do. I don't care what administration, I don't care who's the minister of Finance, I don't care who's in Cabinet, it's never an easy thing to do. Because it's a balance.

But normally, you have to prioritize. You have to prioritize what you think the balance will meet the needs of the people and still be able to meet your fiscal responsibilities. So I'm going to try in the next hour to be hopefully not cynical. Hopefully, not even overly critical. But I do want to talk in fact, in situation and impact on people. And the best way that I've learned from my days as a civil servant, my days in not-for-profits, but particularly my days in coaching, the better way you can find the best plan for it, and the best way to be successful, is to listen to the people around you. Listen to what they're saying; listen to the impact things have on them.

When we do that, we have a better understanding of exactly what our priority should be. Because five people say it, or 15 people say it, it may not be the priority that everybody would need, or should be implemented. But if the masses keep saying continuously these are the issues, these are the challenges, here are the things that we need to improve on, I think that should become your start for your priority list.

So I want to talk to a few things relevant to the budget, and generally the economy and the needs of people of this province, what I've heard and our caucus have heard, and the discussions we've had with a multitude of agencies who represent people from low-income earners to the business community to health professionals to every industry out there. From the mining industry, the oil and gas industry, the trades unions. So all have come with a specific view on how things will affect them, how the economy affects them, how government spending affects them. But to get a true understanding, if you start seeing consistent messages, then that should be the continuum. You want to make the line go in a straight flow, you connect the dots then and you realize that should be the approach that you take.

I commend the Premier and Cabinet for putting together a budget and trying to identify the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. And, no doubt, in this budget there are things that address that. The issue around the civil service still being intact and not massive layoffs obviously speaks volumes to the programs and services that these valued people of this province provide to people from all over

Newfoundland and Labrador. Rural, remote areas in Labrador; rural, remote areas in the Island part of it; to the urban centres: so it is valuable on that.

Investments in other programs and services that have been continuums that we have seen. The issue becomes – and the key labelling that I put here – about priorities. Prioritizing how you're going to address the particular needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This was a unique budget. I'll acknowledge that. It was unique because we're coming off very challenging times when it came to COVID and the impact it had on our economy, the impact it had on changing how people operate and the impact on businesses.

But we're also coming at a time when factors beyond anybody's control, unfortunately, are dictating that the cost of living is going to hit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians more, in my opinion, than anybody else in this country. So to realize that and to effectively address it, you must look at a new, creative way to say that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians shouldn't be left behind. That we should get our fair share and we would find a mechanism that works after we prioritize what has to be done.

The days of being able to do everything for everybody, they probably were never here. But it is less an opportunity to do that now with the economy being what it is and challenges outside of Newfoundland and Labrador that we have to face when you're acknowledging what needs to be done and coming up with prioritizing.

So you have to pick what your prioritized approach should be and who and how, you do two things. I'll state something, and I have had disagreements with people on that side, I have had them with people in the business community and I have had them with my own colleagues. I don't live by the premise in Newfoundland and Labrador that we have a spending problem. I live by the premise that we have so much potential in the province that our spending is relevant to the fact that we have so many needs here geographically, our age population, or demographics, the fact that we're out in the middle of the North Atlantic, or the fact that we're up North – part of our province in

Labrador – that there are ultimate challenges here.

So just to say we're spending a lot of money is one thing. My challenge has been that we're not spending it in the right areas, in a lot of cases, and that's not everything. That's in a number of cases that we could be spending better. A way to find that happy medium is listening to the people out there. Again, and I'll reiterate as I go through my speech, this is about the consistent messages coming from every sector of our society. My two colleagues here who represent Labrador talked about the same things: health care – a consistent message. So it's from Nain, Labrador to Conception Bay South to Burin Peninsula to the Connaigre Peninsula to the Baie Verte Peninsula to the West Coast of this province and the Northern Peninsula. It's everywhere.

It is an issue that we face. I'm going to get in to talking about some of the challenges, and I know we're all aware of them because we've heard them. But some of the things that needed to be addressed or should be addressed and I would think still can be addressed. There is money in departments here. It's a matter when it's allocated, how it can be maneuvered in the right directions. I mean, people forget, while budget allocations – if they're in salary areas or program areas, those programs are based on policy or regulations so they can be adjusted very easily to address specific needs.

So I just want to talk about some of these things. I do want to acknowledge – I mean, the Premier recognized a solid plan was needed when he became leader. That was part of his platform and we all welcomed it. Whoever becomes the premier, we know, is at the helm of moving Newfoundland and Labrador forward. We have a role as the Official Opposition to ensure that government lives up to that responsibility and we'll make suggestions. We may even criticize. We may even chastise if we think they have gone beyond what their roles and responsibilities would have been. But I will guarantee you the Official Opposition, and I would say all Members on this side, have the same mindset to do things that improve the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and that's what we all aspire to do here.

He started by appointing the PERT report and the Greene report that came out to give him a plan. And while the plan was very detailed and I will acknowledge it went, I would suspect, much further than people would have thought in some of its recommendations, I will say I'm not a big fan of the report for a number of reasons. One, I think it took a line where it's easier to cut a lot of things or get rid of things without really analyzing the benefits or the fallout or the shortfalls in not doing certain things.

Now, are there things in that report that could be implemented that could be a benefit financially? Are there things that maybe another sector outside of government might be better or more efficiently could operate that and still provide the service for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? Are there things that conjure up a discussion that we need to have – a serious discussion in this province – about how we provide services and the process we use and the expectations?

My colleague, my Finance critic, has noted many times, and has said, we need to find a happy medium where we give people what they need, not necessarily what they want. We all aspire to want more than probably, or (inaudible) what people need. You give people what they need; they'll succeed. They'll be able to get what they want, that will work. You set the environment.

So we've looked at that. I think he's already committed, the last couple of days in Question Period, talking about some of the challenges, that we need a better plan. This province needs a better plan to address the shortfalls, economically; to also address the issues we have around the challenges of health care; some of the challenges in our education system; some of our challenges in infrastructure; some of our challenges in immigration; and all the things that are relevant to and are important to providing the services to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We're always here. If nothing else, I should get credit for showing that this side of the House wanted to be more collaborative. In the last year since the last election, we've acknowledged that. We're open for discussion, we're open to give some suggestions, we're even open for any

Member on that side, or any member of society to explain to us why what we're proposing isn't workable, or isn't in the right direction that Newfoundland and Labrador should go.

You'll find one thing over here, we're very open minded. We may actually overemphasize sometimes from your perspective a certain particular issue. But, at the end of the day, if any Member over there gets up and outlines why their perspective or their approach or their program would be more beneficial to the people of this province than what we suggested, it won't take very long for us to back off and acknowledge it. And we've done that in the past, and we do acknowledge that.

We all should listen. That's going to be one of the themes of what we do as an Opposition. You need to listen to what the people are saying. I want to overemphasize the fact: if the consistent message is coming from every sector of our society, every part geographically, every demographic in this province, then that should become our priorities. And that's what we have to aspire to, to meet those particular needs.

I said I wouldn't be cynical, and I tried not to be too critical, but I will be a little more critical and cynical of one particular sector here, politically. It's not the official party that's governing here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm talking about the federal government. I, personally, and I think the people of this province, feel we don't get our fair share and that's not because of the Liberal relationship with the federal government, the provincial government, it's gone back many administrations. We don't get our fair share.

How do we get that fair share? I know every now and then we get some extra handouts, some extra supports because we either pull in some political mileage, or we go for a one-time shot. That shouldn't be how a confederation works. Keeping in mind some of the formulas are based on the demographic of population, that's not fair to a province that demographically is massive, geographically it's massive. The demographic makeups are so dramatically different here from age categories to some of the health concerns, to the infrastructure, the climate, all the things there. It should be taken, if you're part of a confederation and you're only going to be given support based on the number of citizens you



have, without taking into account all the other factors that need to be there to provide basic services and quality services. In this country, we should be able to get equal services across the board, if you're in Victoria, BC or you're in Victoria, CBN. It should be the same across the board.

These are some of the things that we think we all should champion. We've made that offer to the Premier, that if there is championing that needs to be done, we do it as collective House. We, in the Official Opposition, are willing to do that, to make sure the federal government understands where we are, not because there are only seven MPs here and if it's not a minority government than it's probably not that significant of what they can do. We know where we are right now when it comes to collaboration in Ottawa, between two particular parties, and that's not a slight at them, but it's a reality for us here.

The influence we may have may be minimized now by the fact that the prime minister knows he has – at least for the next three or four years, what can we draw down on as part of that. So we need to start looking at prioritizing what's important here. Part of that may have to be looking at what's necessary here.

My criticism of some of the things that have happened from this administration recently is about spending money in the right areas and understanding the benefits down the road. The Rothschild report, I'm still baffled, bewildered that – I understand looking at the value of our asset. I was a minister responsible for most of the infrastructure assets so I understood that, and I know there are two or three reports that are there when I was there. I know what the costing of certain things are. I know we have hundreds of very competent people who have a background specifically in that area, if it's an MBA, if it's somebody who does assessment as a consultant, hundreds of them in our own civil service that we're already paying.

I know there are dozens of reports that are already tabled somewhere, on a shelf in some line department, that could be taken, assessed and looked at what it could be. So the spending there caught me off guard. I didn't see the real value. I see the value of the concept of what wanted to be done, but I thought that could be

done in-house or at minimum, somebody else in Newfoundland and Labrador, could have taken it for a tenth of that and formulated all the information that was necessary

Looking at getting consultants, international and national consultants to look at our health care system and how we make cuts there. We've got an extreme number of health professionals who've helped bring programs from their infancy to some of the best programs in the world. We're asking somebody else to look at ways that we change and modify or can be more efficient at it. Again, I think that's narrow minded in thinking. We're not giving credit to the people we have here, and, in my case, spending money that wasn't necessary as part of that.

Also, looking at how we invest money in areas here; I think it needs to be invested in the right areas here. Invest in corporations that are going to generate employment for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, who are going to give back to Newfoundland and Labrador and who are going to ensure that we, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, are the major benefactors of what is happening here.

So there are things like that, that have been my criticisms of this administration and we've said that in Question Period, asking for clarification. Because, again – and I'll reiterate – if there's a rational argument, or a rational approach that has a long-term benefit that we don't see now, and it's explained, it won't take long for us here to acknowledge that and say, okay, we see the rationale, we see where you're going with it, and then we'll pivot to something else. We'll move on to something else that we think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador would want us to talk about.

So we all know what the greatest need is right now in Newfoundland and Labrador, it's the cost of living. The impact that that's going to have on the people of this province. We know the dramatic effect, the mental health issues that are going to be increased because of the stress on people. The quality of life, the dignity of life, that is going to be impacted by people if we don't find a way to address it.

I'm not blaming the Liberals – this is not something you created, but you have the ability here to try and lessen the impact on people by identifying programs and services and implementing things that would be beneficial to the people in the immediate future, get them over this until we can change what's happening in this province. A lot of that has to do with what's happening nationally and internationally. So we need to focus solely, right now, on how we address the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and ensure they get through this crisis that we're in.

And that's what it is, it's a financial crisis; we talked about a health care crisis, and that's one that I'll get into before my time is up. But we also have a financial crisis, particularly for a number of people. Some may be able to weather the storm, no doubt, but there are businesses, there are individuals living on fixed incomes, there are middle-income people who are feeling the crunch of what's happening right now with the increase of the cost of living, fuel, all the other services that are connected to transportation and that here, and even basic services, from getting something delivered here and then put in by a professional. All those costs that they incur have to be passed on to the consumer itself.

I want to go back to the federal perspective, because I think there's a joint approach here over the next number of years. We know we're here until the next provincial and, now we know, federal election which is probably going to be three years down the road, so let's collectively talk about where it is that we can get our fair share when it comes to the federal supports for this province.

We didn't get enough of the health care funding from Ottawa; we know that. Twenty-seven million dollars out of a billion based on, again, per capita. I'm going to give full credit that somebody did go up and argue that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have many other challenges around health care. Again, I keep reiterating, the demographics of where we're located with our health facilities and one tertiary care, our clinics and the remoteness and trying to travel various areas to get these types of things; recruitment around our health professionals, what that meant. To get \$27

million, to me, was an insult, knowing what we needed and knowing, like I said, the demographics of our age categories in this province as part of that. So that's one that I thought we were shortchanged on, and we all need collectively to fight for that.

We were shortchanged billions of dollars. We should have been entitled to equalization for the last number of years, based on a multitude of formula things. I know the formula got changed and pushed out. But it hasn't gotten changed in the last number of decades to benefit the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. So I'm not just blaming one administration in Ottawa; I'm saying this is a reality. My priority and our caucus priority is the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. No doubt, we're all proud Canadians, but right now you can be a lot prouder when you know your people are being taken care of and are getting a fair shake when it comes to being part of this great country.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** We needed to implement the Health Accord quicker. We need to get to it right away, around particularly hiring doctors and nurses, scope of work for paramedics, pharmacists, all the things that can do – the community health teams. We need to immediately start moving those. The Health Accord, seven times we met with them, and every time I was more enlightened about their vision and what was being proposed.

I know there was an immediate proposed vision of what needed to be done. There's a mid-term part of it and then there's a long-term strategy. But we need to get at what the immediate thing is. They've admitted it – very diligent, very competent individuals – that our immediate thing has to be around health care professionals. Recruiting them, identifying them and then providing the process to be able to let them use their expertise to get services to the people of this province.

So we commend that. We commend the Health Accord for being called. We commend exactly the work they've done. Now the issue becomes putting it in play. Not five years down the road, not five months down the road even – immediately. This budget needs to reflect the

needs of recruiting health professionals and putting the mechanism in play that can actually make the Health Accord recommendations fall in play as quick as possible.

Ottawa forgot a couple of things here. It forgot its health funding promises, just like they forgot equalization. The last two federal elections all parties made the same commitments. They made the commitments around changing the equalization formula to ensure that provinces with smaller populations would still get their equal share so that it could address some of their particular issues. It also forgot about its health-funding end. Just because your population is low doesn't mean your needs are not at a higher level. So there are things there that it is surprising that more noise hasn't been made by the provinces to say you didn't live up – particularly the smaller provinces and part of that would be Atlantic Canada about we're not getting our fair share as it comes to that.

Ottawa has done very little, from my perspective and our perspective here, to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador from an average living wage and being able to address the cost of living. I know, I applauded it, the rate mitigation. It is great to see that we will have what we had proposed a number of years ago, 14.7 cents a kilowatt, which is affordable to the people. It is still an increase but it is affordable, particularly as it will put us in one of the lowest costing of hydroelectric power. It does our part, particularly for the environment, and it also does our part to be the cornerstone for the Atlantic Loop.

The one thing I will say, it didn't get as much emphasis as I thought it should. The federal government did put \$250 million and part of that can be accessed for the Atlantic Loop, so they did acknowledge it. I'm glad to see that because one election it was one primary thing about hydroelectric power and the benefits that were going to be here. This one they put some money into it but didn't make a big hoopla about it as part of what it should be. So I see the economic viability of that.

My issue is that most of this money is our own money. It is our Hibernia money. It is a loan guarantee. It is changing the payment scheme. So Ottawa might pat itself – and I will give

credit to the government; we needed this in play because it needed to eliminate the apprehension people had about the soaring price of hydroelectricity for people and their light bills. It needed to ensure the business community would know that they could also have affordable expansion of their business.

But when I looked at it and while the amount meets the needs, it's really not a lot that came from the federal government. There is nothing. They gave us part of our money – they loaned us part of our money. They gave us a nod and a wink and say: Well, you go to the banks and we'll get them to give you a good rate. By the way, to get all of that, you now have got to push how long it's going to take you to pay all the bills out a little bit longer.

So that's a bit disappointing. But I will acknowledge, and I've done this publicly, that at least this has got the right momentum to say we're at least addressing that for the people. So we can hold off; I'm not worrying about our light bills getting to a point where it's adding again to the challenges that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We need collectively to be telling the story to the Trudeau administration and to Ottawa. Because we know what happened; we know the rumours – and these were not rumours, the Bay du Nord. I know they weren't rumours because I had calls. I had discussions with MPs and federal ministers about the dissension, the split and the fear that the Bay du Nord Project would not happen.

You know, we brought it to the forefront. Not because we wanted to fear monger; as a matter of fact, we didn't even try to make it that big a political thing. We wanted clarification in the House. This wasn't even an attack on the Liberal administration here. This was about Newfoundlanders and Labradorians coming together to ensure we got something that was valuable to the people here, and valuable to the workers in Newfoundland and Labrador, and sent a message that the oil and gas industry is still vibrant here, and that we're open for business, as long as the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the businesses here and the communities are the benefactors.

I'm glad to see it worked out; I'm glad to see that, and I give credit to the minister, to the Premier and to everybody. I give credit to our people for keeping it front and centre; I give credit to the industry people who wanted to ensure that this needed to be out there. So this was one of those where collectively we all did our part; we may not have come together probably the way we could have, that might have made it a little better. But I understand everybody has got their approaches to it, and the end result, it worked out.

But my fear is, how close did we come in sending the wrong message to the world that Newfoundland and Labrador is not open for business? We are saying to our oil and gas industry that has helped us, sustained our quality of life, has helped us put business in place to transition to other things – nobody is beyond the concept of transitioning, when the transitioning is ready to happen, and when we have the resources and the training and all the things in play to make that happen.

So we need to ensure we never get to the edge of the cliff again when it comes to the federal government dictating to us in Newfoundland and Labrador what our viability should be and what our economics should be. So if that means we collaborate together, let's get to that point. Let's share that information with everybody in this House, so that we can all collectively get together and find a way to move things forward.

We did a PMR last Wednesday – for those who don't know a private Member's resolution – that talked about addressing the cost of living and finding ways to, collectively, as a House, address those needs. I was so happy to see that all Members supported it on both sides of the House. All Members supported it because, again, I will say, I have no doubt that every Member in this House of Assembly wants to do what's best for their constituents and for all in this province and no doubt that was the plan.

Now, I did hear a lot of acknowledgement that just wait the budget is coming tomorrow. There was nobody more than us on this side who were waiting in anticipation for a lot of good things to address the issues that we had talked about and that my colleagues on the opposite side had

talked about, also, that was important to the people addressing those issues.

While I've said it before, and I'll say it again, I give credit for the effort in this budget by the Liberal administration, it fell short in a lot of areas, unfortunately. Now, am I critical of what was announced? Not at all. A lot of the programs there, the cuts, some of the incentives and all that, will serve a purpose and do help in its own right, but it didn't go far enough. It didn't go in the right directions of what needed to be done, particularly for our most vulnerable, middle class, benefits to businesses to ensure that they can hire more people, keeping the cost of living down, food and fuel. There's a multitude of things that could have been done.

I'm not dismissing what was done, that's not – very few of the things that were announced would I say we wouldn't do. My issue is we can't do everything right now. What we would have done is prioritize what should have been the first ones and that was directly about the cost of living.

We saw that yesterday in Question Period here, when we talked about the graph that was put out. The Premier admitted, and I think we all admitted it, and I'm not going to emphasize it too much that it really doesn't reflect what people would say. The reality is here, people are still going to struggle, even with what was implemented because some of those may have been better used, not that they wouldn't have been a benefit and not that they're not going to help some people, but to prioritize what would have been an immediate response to helping those in need.

We know where that comes across the board with cost of fuel, which in turn keeps money in everybody's pocket, because people need to be able to move, if it's mass transportation, if it's the taxi industry – another one of the industries I personally feel are being left out, are not getting the support that they need. I know that they didn't get it during COVID, it wasn't there and that's not a criticism of the provincial government. That's more of a criticism of the federal government, but I know there wasn't enough lobbying for them to be able to sustain their quality of life. Now we're in a quandary

where they can't recruit drivers and we're coming upon a Come Home Year.

This is going to be devastating, particularly, in the Northeast Avalon. I know when you get out – tourism in not just about that, but this is the point where most are going to enter. You want to be able to make sure that their first experience, when they land, is that they get transportation going and they're not waiting hours. That's not counting the fact that our own residents who need cabs for all kinds of reasons don't have it. So I say that around cuts or supports that were needed across the board.

The cost of fuel, which has an impact then on the freight, which means the cost of goods and services, particularly food. What we could have done to help some of the other people of this province keep the cost of food down. We already know in the wintertime it's a struggle for us to be able to maintain good quality food, just by the nature of geography, where we live and how far we are from stuff as part of that.

One of the things – and I did have a number of city councillors reach out to me – was about the low-income bus passes. I thought – as a matter of fact, I even stood here and complimented the government – that was a good process to implement.

As you know, one of the biggest criticisms that we have had of this administration for the last seven years has been getting rid of things that worked; things that had been proven to be beneficial. It makes no difference who takes credit for it, but we had a poverty reduction strategy that took us from here – down here where we were scrambling to be able to keep people engaged; find out how we get people to be able to be productive citizens; how we could make them employable; deal with some of their social issues; make sure that the next generation wasn't reliant on Income Support or government programs; and we elevated to here. We were the envy, not only of this country but North America.

I had a small part in one of the segments of that and I know my colleague, the Member for Topsail - Paradise, was directly involved, also. And we know what it meant around immigration. We know what it meant around

youth at risk. We know what it meant around single parents. We know what it meant around seniors and middle age for retraining. We know what it meant around businesses being able to recruit people and training the supports we did.

So that got dismissed, unfortunately. It got left by the wayside. It went away. There was versions that it was going to be added to. I remember going to a briefing one time and I thought they were revisiting and they were going to add something to it. Anyway, it got lost. It's done and gone, but what I would have hoped in this budget is they could have resurrected some parts of that that were very successful, that were already documented. You didn't have to spend a lot of time on it. You didn't have to spend a lot of consulting money on it, I guarantee you. You didn't have to bring in people from outside of this Confederation Building to actually look at how it works, or you could reach out to one of the agencies who were the stewards of this or the architects of it and get that to work.

So that was a bit disappointing around not being able to go that route. We didn't have to reinvent the wheel, all we had to do was pick the wheel up again because it was there and we knew it was proven to work. So that was disappointing of where we are right here.

When the city took that down, I mean, we saw the difference here with low-income people within the city. Again, this is not just about an urban issue. This is a bigger picture about putting supports in play for people. The city themselves – when we can get a municipality to partner with the provincial government in a program, b'y we'd better keep that as close as possible. We should foster that.

You know, we're talking about regionalization, I would hope what we're trying to do here is take all municipalities, non-incorporated areas, Local Service Districts, to come together to provide the best services possible in the most equitable way possible and expand them with the monies that we can save by doing joint projects.

So there are some things here that I thought we missed and I know there are people from the city who are upset. I know those who service low-income people who need this access for public transportation and I know what this would mean

to places like Paradise and Conception Bay South and Portugal Cove-St. Philip's and Torbay, all surrounding areas who would like to be able to access public transportation. We thought this would be the next step to moving forward. It's a step backward, unfortunately, to look at that.

I also want to talk a little bit about what we identified or what was discussed in the Health Accord. I say this tongue-in-cheek but I say it with pure sincerity. It was good to have the Health Accord senior people admit that we're in a health crisis. I say tongue-in-cheek because the one thing you don't want to be able to say is you're not in crisis in Newfoundland and Labrador.

You're never going to solve your issue, particularly if it's a crisis, if you don't first admit that it exists. So having people at that level who do this on a daily basis, who've been talking to thousands of people, citizens, health professionals, about what the issues are in Newfoundland and Labrador, then you can better address how you do that. So issues that were identified, that we're all facing, we talk about it here in the House every day, the lack of family doctors. One in five Newfoundlanders and Labradorians don't have access to a family doctor.

I know, Mr. Speaker, I spent five nights in emergency with a family member with a health issue. I spoke to people who were sat there and they were almost apologetic because they know they weren't coming in for a life-saving procedure. But there was something that they needed, something that was detrimental to their health that they couldn't wait until the next day, because they didn't have anywhere else to go the next day either. The only opportunity they had was to go there.

And they felt guilty because they saw somebody coming in who probably just had a heart attack, or a stroke, or somebody who was bleeding extremely, or had a broken bone, or some other major serious ailment that needed to be addressed and they felt guilty that they were taking chairs up, that there were gurneys in the hallway. They almost felt they shouldn't be there.

And they shouldn't be, because we should have a system in play that they shouldn't have to go for day-to-day issues or interventions that a family doctor can do.

So that is one of the key things that we are missing here in this province is our approach to really getting at the root of why our doctors are not staying, how we get them to stay, how we get them to be committed to rural and remote communities and how we work to meet their needs and not burn them out. How do we use the scope of work when it comes to nurses and nurse practitioners and registered nurses and LPNs? How do we make paramedics have a bigger role in the delivery of health care? How do we get pharmacists and all the other health professionals we have here? Our change should be around how we deliver health care, not minimize it or segregate certain people from not having access to it. That is not what this should be about.

We needed to talk about –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Thank you.

**D. BRAZIL:** There is a reality here; there is a COVID backlog in surgeries. We need to know that. That is a reality and that is not a blame on anybody; COVID did that. We need a plan to be able to actually address that immediately. Not a long-term, 10-year plan, an immediate plan that actually addresses it. If it means investing more money – we've said this here before, if we saw dramatic increases in funding for health care and it addressed the needs, I guarantee you our Opposition would be supporting that and acknowledging the benefits here. Because we have heard it from our constituents and we've heard it from constituents from our colleagues over there who also reach out to us about challenges they have in their district.

So there are some of the things that we felt should be a better priority in this budget itself. Mental health funding, we all know there is nobody in this House not supportive of understanding that there is a big gap in mental health. We've come a long way, I know, from

the infancy days of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I think that was the big cornerstone of everybody understanding in this province, but particularly the elected officials, that we do have a major challenge and a crisis in mental health and we needed to implement a number of things.

Have we done great work? Of course we have. I have seen it in my own district. I have seen it with people I have talked to. I have seen what we have done. Are there a number of other things just from that report that need to be implemented and should be prioritized? Exactly. We need to go back to that report and start picking out what needs to be prioritized and implementing those and putting our money where our mouth is. If we're going to solve the issues of people, make them more productive citizens, give them a quality of life, we need to find ways to do that and invest the monies that need to go there.

If it means we change where our priorities are, that has to be. Do we need, now, to be more creative when it comes to mental health? Sure we do. Is it welcomed when the federal government sends us some money for mental health? Without a doubt. Do we like some of the issues around addictions investments? Of course we do. But I want to make it clear: If you are prioritizing issues and they're relevant to the people of the province, have no illusion, we're over here to support those. We hear the same things. So we're here to do that.

So don't think we're all in this House and we work in silos. That has been one of the criticisms of some of the decisions being made around health care: working in silos. Senior managers who are at the department's level work in silos. You need to work collectively so people can find the best solutions.

Health care professionals – I know when we got in to get the intervention that were needed for my family member, health care was second to none. The compassion, the skillset, the understanding, being at your beckon call for all the patients was second to none. The issue becomes – I know and I saw it – some of these people were overworked. They were burnt out. They were giving you still 110 per cent, but you knew eventually it was going to break. We knew

emergency is a pure mess. That's not because of the people that work there; the system has to be improved. There has to be an improvement for emergency.

One of the systems that need to be improved is having more doctors in advance of that in family practice so that they can address some of the issues that don't have to be addressed at emergency at 3 in the morning, or at 7 the next morning. These are things that have to be done and can be done.

I talked to a number of physicians. I'm going to sit there 10 hours one day, 17 hours another day, 14 another day, I'm going to talk to the health professionals. I'm going to ask questions. Particularly when they know who I am, they're a little bit more apt to open up and say what their concerns are. I found it a very good process for me to understand what's happening, stuff I had no idea how to health care system, simple things that could be improved upon.

We need to find the mechanism for those people, not the Rothschilds, not some other collaborative consultants from New York City or somebody else to do it. The people who are front liners, the people who are middle management, they're the ones who would know that. They then pass it on up the line to the senior management who then can implement these programs and use their budget lines in the right manner.

We need to start looking at exactly what's happening. We know it's a reality. We've had the Medical Association say they're not pleased with this budget. It doesn't go where it needs to go to address their particular needs of recruitment, enhancement, retention and preventing burnout for physicians of all levels here. We know the Nurses' Union have said the same thing. This has to be about recruitment. It has to be about offering more opportunities. It has to be about changing the approach to health care.

I know there has been a lot of talk about it, but unfortunately we didn't see a lot of substance in this budget of how that was going to be done. We seen a fair bit about consultants who, again, I'm not quite sure that they've sat in the emergency room with people for 15 hours, or they've had a procedure in Newfoundland and

Labrador, or they live in a remote area where they're waiting two days to get a medevac out of their community. That worries me there when the solutions can be homegrown. We talked about the carbon tax here was to be homegrown. We plotted that if you can get something here that works for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and is less burdening on them, or addresses their particular needs, that's the route we should be going. But we didn't see that in what's happening now in addressing our health care challenges here.

You know, we wanted to look at things that show this province is standing up for what's right for the people of this province. That means challenging how we deliver programs and services. But particularly challenging the federal government to be fair to the people of this province here. So we need a better approach to what's being done here.

The people in this province haven't seen the things that they were hoping for. They haven't seen a decrease in the cost of food. They haven't seen a decrease at the pumps. They haven't seen a reassurance that their quality of life has to improve. Most have said to me now, if we can just sustain, if I don't go further and further in debt, if I don't continually fall behind, if I don't continually have to make decisions between heat, food, my medication – forget social things, I mean there's a group of people now who've given up totally on that. We have one lady yesterday said, on *Open Line*, who had noted you know what seniors need to do now? Is just sit in their chair and not move, because that's all their going to be able to do – those on fixed income.

So that's pitiful when we should be acknowledging the rewards, what they've contributed, that they're still very viable contributors to our society, and have them engage in every part of our society and every facet of educating our young people, of talking about our traditions, as part of what we're doing. We talk about the industries here. We have so many viable industries. I said that at the beginning here; I don't see it as much about a spending issue we have in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I do think we can be very much more effective and frugal on how we spend our money, but I would think we could sustain \$8-billion budgets if we had a better handle on getting a return on our investments. Our investments being the resources we have in Newfoundland and Labrador, our part of Confederation, getting our fair share from Ottawa. And then finding the most effective way to spend that \$8 billion to meet the needs. Sometimes the \$8 billion might be more than \$8 billion, because we're generating more revenue.

I'm a real believer that government and this province need to set the environment for businesses to flourish here and invest here. I mean, Verafin, what an example of what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can do with government support. I give credit. Government supported this; I know the minister for a number of times went down and supported them, spoke highly of them, showed that Newfoundland and Labrador was open for business, showed that the expertise here is second to none, and showed that Verafin was open to bring experts in from other provinces to work here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I got to meet a couple of them over the last number of years who have settled here. This is their home now. They're contributing here.

Now, we're hopeful that Verafin, since the sale, will only expand and take us to a global market where other companies or other people in the same sector, would say: let's check out this Newfoundland and Labrador. They've got some good things happening down there. But to do that they need to know that we're open for business, the environments is here. But we need to know, as citizens, that the benefactors are going to be the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and that's across the board when it comes to any industry in this province.

So there are a number of things there that we could be doing better, that we need to put upfront. This is who we are. This is who we represent. This is what we stand for and this is what we want to do if you want to come to Newfoundland and Labrador and do business.

That would generate the revenues that we need in this province to be able to provide the



services. But we need to, also, say to the federal government: Look, we're part of this Confederation, but you don't dictate whether or not Newfoundland and Labrador thrives, economically. We'll work collaboratively. There's no reason why the federal government should arbitrarily be controlling what is happening in our fishing industry. No reason whatsoever. We've been at this a lot longer than this Confederation has been a country in Newfoundland and Labrador. So we should have input into what happens in the fishing industry.

Our offshore oil and gas industry: no different, same way. When they can bring in regulatory issues or there are some MPs from Quebec or Ontario or BC who dictate that they don't like something that we're doing here or they heard something about something in the oil industry here that might be detrimental somewhere down the road. Yet, they get to dictate, potentially, what could happen in our industries. That's not good enough, not good enough at all.

You know, we're an equal partner here. We came in accepting Confederation and I would hope we continue to be accepted in this Confederation, and you know where Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are in this country because we're everywhere. We're succeeding everywhere and we're needed everywhere in this country and that's why we need to show, again, that we get our fair share.

On the many occasions that we've lobbied in the House of Assembly here – and I know the colleagues across there and I know the Premier's done it and the ministers, they have pulled in whatever political mileage they could to ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador got theirs, but we shouldn't have to be doing that. We should be able to go up and state our case and our case would be based on fact. Our case would be based on the merits of who we are, what we have, what we contribute. We know the hundreds of billions of dollars that we've contributed to this federation in our 73 years. And I say hundreds of billions, I'd say even beyond that if you look at the resources that have been taken from us without us really getting any real benefit from the secondary processing now.

Now, we're starting to get a bit better. You know, I give credit, the Inco plant is a great example of where we're starting to get some of the secondary processing.

The fishing industry, at times we do well and other times we get a sort of slap in the face, not being able to control what we want to do. I get that.

Mining, we've already set the example that we can do our own secondary processing here in any industry. There is no reason why we couldn't.

The oil and gas industry, the refineries trying to get back. I give credit, again, we know that was teetering on whether or not that would survive. We have got it back to at least it is now going to be still viable. It is going to create a number of jobs for people, it is great for that region, but there is no reason why we can't expand those things.

The oil and gas industry and the reliance on fossil fuels is going to be here for decades, and anybody who tells you that's not the fact, they're living in an illusion that is not reality. Do we all want to protect the environment? One hundred per cent. Do we all see a time and an effort for transitioning? That time will come, as we all now are cognizant of it.

The conversations around green energy and the environment: The last two decades has been more than it has been since the world was created. So I suspect over the next number of years it will ramp up even more and more. More people will be cognizant of what we need to do. More industries will do whatever they can to keep the environment clean.

I know the oil and gas industry have done everything that is possible to make things move in the right direction to show that they're environmentally friendly, that they minimize the impact on the environment by the products that they produce. So does it across factories in Ontario or out West or in Quebec or anywhere in this country of ours. So we need to be cognizant of where we are as part of that.

A couple of the other things that I wanted to talk about here. People would say – and I know it's

been said here: Well, what would you do differently? Well, I'll tell you what we would do.

One is we would prioritize, and prioritize based on what we've heard across the board, the common denominators in Newfoundland and Labrador. The common denominators in Newfoundland and Labrador were about the economy, were about quality of life and were about health care. Then it was about the other things that are important, too. Infrastructure, we need those things. But these were the key things that would do it.

How do you do these things? Well, do you know what? Your income, the crisis people are facing financially. One of the big income issues here is about taxation, the impact on people. The cost of taxation on everything, from gasoline and home heating fuel. That's one of the immediate things.

I remember my mother used to tell me: David, the first priority you should have in life is to pay off your home. Because if you own your home you won't have to worry about much more after that. Because if you own your home you should be able to – she knew me, I had no qualms in driving a \$100 car, if I had to, if it got me from A to B and I'd find a job doing something somewhere. It may not be a lucrative job but you would do that. But if you own your home, you had that.

That's no longer the issue because the issue is not only about owning your home; to heat your home now is as costly as the mortgage on your home for a lot of people. I know that, I filled up an oil tank at my house in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's the other day and it was 32 per cent more than it was this time last year – 32 per cent. Even that had an impact on me, and that might be fine for me who has a decent income, but for those on fixed incomes, for those seniors.

I've had one senior, God rest her soul, she passed away and her spouse is now – look at the difference there. When you have two incomes coming in and now it's dramatically down and now all these added increases.

I know there are some incentives there and I know the government tried to do something for the seniors and that, but it didn't go far enough.

It becomes, unfortunately, a small proportion of what they need and what the impact is. We moved them up one step. Unfortunately, the cost moved up 10 steps, and how you make that gap is not there. It's not there if you're 78 years old and you're living by yourself and you don't have other supports from family members or if you just lost your spouse or your house is 65 years old. I know we have programs to help do that, but then there's a whole encompassing process. It's not as simple as people think.

That's one of things we would have talked about, charging the taxation on gasoline and home heat.

One thing – and I've asked for that, I know my colleagues have asked for and we're still baffled at it, I get at the time why it was there – is the five cent additional per litre costing that would offset the transition from the refinery while it was down to keep it warm idling to ensure that it was still going to be viable. I know the arguments have been the PUB. I've been asking for it. My colleagues here have been asking for at least the last 14 months, 13 months to do that. If it is a five or six month process with the PUB, that could have all been done, put through and hearings could have been had and the review and the whole process. That would have at least been another break at the pumps.

We do know and our understanding is the companies that it was meant to be for. Fair enough, but every other company is taking advantage of this, at the expense of the consumer here. That's not fair. That would have been another five cents there.

Home heating rebate: I mean we had a great program a number of years ago. The uptake was dramatic, but it was necessary for people. It did its part there. It got people through the hard months of the winter and that. So a home heat rebate would have been an easy thing to implement, minimal administrative costs and it would have actually addressed the needs, particularly for those most vulnerable.

The sugar tax: I was so pleased to see the other day – I picked up a litre of milk and it had on it 25 per cent less sugar. So that tells me the industry are doing their part. We don't have to force things down people's throats, particularly

when we dispute that there's going to be any benefit whatsoever – any benefit whatsoever in this world.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** So it is a taxation, call it what you may. I know in principle at the beginning, because even we talked about it, it sounded like it was something that would be really beneficial from a health perspective. We've talked to people in the industry and, fair enough, if we can minimize or eliminate sugar in people's diet and this type of thing, particularly those who are more vulnerable to it, then that would be a benefit health-wise.

But in this case, we analyzed it from every angle, we talked to health professionals and we talked to people who are advocates for it who now realize that it's probably not going to achieve the goal that we wanted. We talked to the industry and we said perhaps co-operating with the industry for them to find ways to eliminate sugar in their products, as part of that, versus taxing, particularly low-income people – because some of the consumers here are going to be those who can't rely, can't afford, some of the more expensive drinks out there.

So putting a tax on that is only going to take more money out of the people who are most vulnerable, which means there's less opportunity they're going to have to buy fruit or vegetables that they're going to need to keep them healthy. So things like that were a bit baffling, and we had an argument and we thought we had a discussion around what would work, and of course, obviously, it didn't go anywhere. So I'm still hopeful that when it's thought about, you look at the merits of doing that, it's not in the best interest, it doesn't serve what you would think and it's going to probably do more damage than it would do good.

Is there a plan, or should there be a plan that we would support, about working how we reduce sugars in particular food items, drinks, whatever it may be? If we could also find ways to reduce sugar in other areas, to educate people around it and get people to understand that, that would be something that we would welcome and we would 100 per cent support.

Commit not to increase taxation. We saw in the Greene report some of the worrisome recommendations there, about selling off our valuable assets, for one-time shots. These are assets that continue to fund programs on a continuous basis. In some cases, we know, will be much more lucrative particularly when the economy increases again, and becomes more viable, and these products are what people are going to have a demand for. So why would we get rid of something that's viable, it's profitable? If you've got a multitude of private sector people wanting it, that speaks volumes. That tells me that's the one you should hold onto.

Are there assets that are no value to us right now, or not as valuable, or probably costing us that maybe the private sector could take and run more efficiently and make profitable? Sure there are. They are the ones I would sit down continuously and have that discussion, and I think collectively as a House we could have a discussion on some of those, once we know the logistics of what's there.

That's where the Greene report fell short. It didn't have the analysis of what was valuable, what wasn't, what would be an asset that the private sector could be better fitted to operate or provide, what would be something that is a loss leader for us now that we're losing on, that we could get rid of even if we didn't gain anything financially from it, but in the long run that we would gain money forever and a day.

So as I get closer to concluding, I want to talk about some of the things that we talk about, the positive things in this province. Let's talk about our ocean technology. It's flourishing here; it's booming. There are a lot of good things happening in this province. I mean, supports have come across the board here. Industry people are coming here. The industries are looking at what's happening here.

Offshore oil: We dodged a bullet last week, but I'm very confident and the industry is confident that this will continue to flourish in Newfoundland and Labrador. There are a number of other projects there that should be sanctioned, that should move forward. Be cognizant of what we're doing with our environment, and there are ways that could be

supported very easily, make it more efficient from an environment point of view.

Our mining industry, we know what's happening there. That is booming. You go out in Central Newfoundland and you go up in Labrador, it is booming. Let's continue that. Let's show we're open for business. Let's show we can be cognizant of our environment, make sure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are the benefactors and that we understand these companies are here to make money. We have no problem with that. Let's flourish that.

We had the opportunity as a caucus to meet with a couple of these mining companies, and they're enthused. They're not here to grab and run. They're here for the long haul. They're here to do what's for the benefit of their shareholders, while making sure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are also benefactors.

Aquaculture and fisheries: We just talked about it. The thing is they're all flourishing. But we need to make sure, Minister, that Ottawa doesn't dictate what we do in Newfoundland and Labrador. That has to be the key thing. That has to be the key thing here.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Our tourism industry, the minister yesterday was under the misconception that I don't support the tourism industry. We don't on this side. My first job in government, almost 40 years ago, was in the tourism industry. I'm a bigger supporter and I'm on different committees here – very supportive. But we need to prioritize when we can invest in certain parts of the tourism industry and when we need to prioritize where we spend some of our money.

Very enthused about what's happening in the tourism industry. I come from Bell Island. Right now, tourism is what's going to save Bell Island in the near future. That's a reality. We came from a mining community; that's one part of it. There's a big strategy to do that. Tourism is very important in this province.

Agriculture again – the agricultural industry in Newfoundland, you can see it, the last number of years, picking up. Younger people are getting into it. I got to speak to a group of young

farmers; very enthused about it. So very, very cognizant of what's going to happen there.

The forest industry again – the forest industry was on a downward swing for a period of time, but it's stabilized now. We've got people into it. We've got companies out there doing things. The mill is still working on the West Coast, and we know there's stuff there that's starting to flourish. They weathered the storm when every other mill across North America and in the world was shutting down. They have a great future out there. We just need to be able to support it to move it to the next level.

International education: People are coming flocking from all over the world to come to Newfoundland and Labrador because what we offer them. The aerospace industry, second to none here. The investments are happening here as we go. We're attracting investments from all sectors.

We've got the hedge funds want to come here. There are pension plans that want to come here to invest in Newfoundland and Labrador, and there's a reason for that, because they see we're open for business. They see that we have the environment. They see we have the skill set to do what needs to be done for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

What we ask and we implore every Member of the House of Assembly to ensure that the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are the benefactors of whatever industry flourishes in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

In my capacity as assistant deputy Deputy Government House Leader, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that this House do now recess.

**SPEAKER:** 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 recessed until 2 p.m.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we begin, I'd like to welcome a new Page; it's a face that we've seen here a couple of times, who I'd like to officially introduce. His name is Yeshwin Ayappa; he's from South India and studying economics and statistics at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Welcome.

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

**SPEAKER:** In the public gallery today, and I had the honour to meet these ladies, I would like to welcome members of the Bonavista Mission Team: Lora Swyers, Sandra Durdle, Betty Lou Genge, Ivy Harnett and Susan Heath. They will be joining us today for a Member's statement.

Welcome.

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

**SPEAKER:** Also in the public gallery, I would like to recognize members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public Planners: Julia Schwarz, President; Lindsay Lyghtle-Brushett, Vice-President; Stephen Jewczyk, Legislation Committee; Christopher Hardy, Treasurer; Ken O'Brien, member. They will be joining us for a Ministerial Statement.

Welcome.

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

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we will hear Members' statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Placentia West - Bellevue, Bonavista, Terra Nova, Conception Bay South and Burin - Grand Bank.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

**J. DWYER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I stand in this hon. Chamber today to recognize and celebrate the life of the late Mr. J. William (Bill) Kenway of Baine Harbour who passed away on March 25, 2022, at the age of 74.

Bill was the definition of a true gentleman. I had the pleasure of knowing Bill through his time as mayor of Baine Harbour. His pride for his community and his eagerness to help his neighbour was certainly on display in every conversation I had with this gentleman.

Bill was also a family man, leaving to mourn his wonderful wife Barbara, son Brad, daughter Bonita, four grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, five brothers and sisters, along with a number of nieces, nephews and close friends.

I invite all my hon. colleagues in joining myself and the beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue in sending our sincere thoughts and condolences to the Kenway family as they mourn the loss of such a great gentleman, Mr. Bill Kenway.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Commencing in 2009, several residents of the Bonavista and area conducted humanitarian trips to Uganda to help make a difference in the lives of many. Cathy Harris, leader of the initial three missions, named then Prodigal Ministries, Sandra Durdle, Eileen Faulkner, Joan Marsh,

Pauline Fleming, Courtney Street, Betty Lou Genge, Ivy Harnett, Lora Swyers and Eliza Swyers, after a year's preparation work, travelled to Uganda to assist locals and provide aid.

Referred to as the Bonavista Mission Team, this group has helped build a schoolhouse, churches, houses and assist financially when and where deemed worthy. In one case, a motorcycle was arranged for a family to assist a business opportunity for taxi services. The group provided food, clothes, footwear, solar lights and treats for children and families.

This dedicated group is active in the District of Bonavista as well, by helping to build better lives and enhancing wellness. The mission group looks forward to returning to Uganda in February 2023, and continuing to make a difference in our own Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating the outstanding humanitarian contribution of the Bonavista Mission Team.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the last two years have been extremely challenging for all competitive athletes in the province to train. Through dedication, hard work, determination, and support of their family, coaches and Clarenville Nordic Ski Club, two outstanding athletes have represented not only Clarenville, but the entire province.

Jillian and Jocelyn Coates – also known as Two Coates of Wax – had their sights set on the nationals in Whistler, BC, and thankfully, when COVID restrictions changed last minute, they were able to attend the national Cross-Country Ski Championships, March 17 to 26, 2022.

This Canadian ski race hosted racers from all provinces, ranging in ages from 14 to 30. The highlight for the girls of this event was watching

their mentor, Olympic medallist Jessie Diggins, one of the fastest skiers in North America.

In a normal year, there are a series of 10 races provincially. As recent as the past weekend, they travelled to Corner Brook for provincials, won medals and made their mark in their retro outfits. Having fun is a big contributor to their love of this sport.

They are active ambassadors and coaches with the Clarenville Nordic junior program, and mentors for every skier of all ages across the entire province. The dynamic duo now have Canada Games on their radar, and I wish them great success.

Success is always doing your best.

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

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

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

Speaker, the Town of Conception Bay South is home to many of the province's finest athletes. On March 24, I had the pleasure of attending the 2021 CBS Sports Awards and Sports Hall of Fame Ceremony at the Manuels River Hibernia Interpretation Centre.

During the evening, their achievements and perseverance were highlighted and the challenges they encountered during the pandemic. It was evident the important role sport has played in the development of youth and adults alike within our great town.

All nominees were honoured and the following athletes were the recipients of the 2021 awards: Junior Female Athlete of the Year, Adele Martin; Junior Male Athlete of the Year, Daniel Martin; Senior Female Athlete of the Year, Lauren Rowe; Senior Male Athlete of the Year, Drew Sheppard; Executive of the Year, Calvin Randell; Coach of the Year, Robert Nugent; and Team of the Year, Baymen Senior Men's Rugby team.

I would also like to congratulate the Sports Hall of Fame inductees: Mr. Thomas Kieley, Michelle Porter, Steve Batten, John Baldwin and

Jack Mercer who contributed tremendously to our sporting community.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the 2021 Conception Bay South Sports Award recipients.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

**P. PIKE:** Speaker, the great Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is so fortunate to have CYN, Canada Youth Network, consisting of 27 main hubs and six satellite sites that engage youth and young adults through the provision of meaningful programs and services that support their inclusion, skills development and civic engagement.

The District of Burin - Grand Bank is fortunate to have two of these organizations, one in the town of St. Lawrence and the other in Grand Bank.

CYN provides the youth with opportunities for participation in social and economic development by focusing on learning, employment, community capacity building and recreation.

Our CYNs offer after-school programs that encourage inclusion and provide opportunities for children aged eight to eleven and drop-ins from Grade 7 to 12, which includes recreation and homework activities.

Other activities and programs include youth leadership and employment, mental health and healthy living and programs that provide intergenerational and community communication to reduce the isolation of seniors and other vulnerable groups.

The major part of the program focuses on training for first aid, leadership, linkages and summer programming for children.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in showing our appreciation to the CYN boards, coordinators, staff and volunteers. They are

committed to maintaining opportunities for the youth of the District of Burin - Grand Bank and this beautiful province.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

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

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

On behalf of government, I would like to recognize an important day in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was on April 13, 1925, that the first woman gained the right to vote and hold public office in this province. This was made possible after years of advocacy and through the efforts of the suffragettes who campaigned tirelessly to make their voices heard and their voices count.

In October 1928, 52,343 women cast ballots in their first general election representing a remarkable 90 per cent voter turnout rate.

Speaker, I am pleased to say that today, all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians aged 18 and older have the right to vote and run for public office. In 2021, a record number of women put their names forward for election at all levels of government in our province.

As we look to the future, I encourage all women and gender-diverse people to continue exercising their right to vote and to consider serving as elected representatives of the people.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing the anniversary of the first woman getting the right to vote in our province. May we all continue to advance towards true gender equality and honour the rights of all people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

**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.

Today is an important day. It is the anniversary of when women gained the right to vote and hold public office in this province 97 years ago. This day is a chance to reflect and acknowledge the trailblazer women in Newfoundland and Labrador like Grace Sparkes and Hazel Newhook. But it is also a day to reflect on how much work is left to be done in advancing gender equity in politics.

We all have a duty to empower women, non-binary and gender-diverse individuals in the political arena. So let's all work together to create a gender-diverse representation in this hon. House of Assembly.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Equal access to democracy is something that we should all be proud of and protect dearly. We encourage this government to listen to the research from Equal Voice and not call snap elections to ensure that women can prepare for elections so that more women can be successful in their campaigns and hold public office in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

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

I recently had the pleasure of joining members of the Professional Planners Association of Newfoundland and Labrador for a virtual event focusing on the important contribution that planners make to the growth and vitality of communities.

Over half of the municipalities in the province have municipal plans and developmental regulations. Other municipalities are working on preparing their very first plans. Municipalities understand the importance of establishing goals for sustainable development and improving the quality of life for their residents.

Planning is an essential tool to attract industry, residents and professionals, which are all vital to achieving sustainable, local communities. Through land-use planning, municipalities have a consistent set of rules that will apply to everyone and can help meet community goals.

Speaker, as we review the Joint Working Group report on Recommendations for Regionalization it is clear that land-use planning is a critical component to guide our communities into the future.

With that in mind, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will begin work towards preparing Professional Planners legislation. This is a very important step in the process of developing professional self-regulating legislation for the association.

I look forward to working with the association as we begin this very important work.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Thank you, Speaker, and I'd like to think the hon. minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Speaker, as a former mayor myself of my beautiful hometown of Pouch Cove, I know first-hand the importance of professional land-use planning. Professional planners are an integral role in shaping the future of



communities and regions. Municipalities would simply not be able to function without the important role that ensures consistency and transparency in the application of development regulations, amongst others.

Speaker, I would be remiss not to note that the minister's department also has a municipal legislation review underway, city acts and the Northeast Avalon Regional Plan, which has been ongoing for quite some time.

I do hope that the Professional Planners legislation the minister references includes service standards and time frames with accountability so that municipalities will not be left waiting on approvals from government.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for a copy of her statement.

A province cannot be properly managed without a robust plan crafted with transparency and respectful public engagement. We encourage the government's recognition of how vital it is for plans and the intentions to be disclosed to the people we represent across all municipalities, across all communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

Taxi operators in our province have received very little support, especially during COVID. Taxi operators are facing challenges in recruiting drivers and face significant administrative burden and red tape.

Come Home Year means more visitors will be using taxis.

I ask the Premier: What is he going to do to make it easier for taxi operators to recruit drivers?

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

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

And of course we're sympathetic to the plight of the taxi drivers. They provide an incredible service, not just to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador but to the people who come to Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

We understand that these are challenging times for the taxi industry and we're here to support them in any way we can, like providing support for motor vehicle registration, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to work with them. If they have innovative solutions, we're interested to sit with them at the table to ensure that they are able to meet their full professional capacity, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Well, I can inform the Premier that the taxi operators association have presented ways that they could reduce red tape so that they could enhance other drivers, so that we are ready for Come Home Year and it's not an embarrassment when people land at this airport, Mr. Speaker.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, a doctor in Central Newfoundland and Labrador has taken to social media to outline the challenges facing health care centres in the region. Stories of full

emergency rooms, patients from multiple rural sites having to wait for virtual care and stories of the demoralized staff. She calls – and I quote – the system that is consistently close to collapse.

I ask the Premier: Why do you keep talking about long-term plans when the immediate need in our province is staring you straight in the face?

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

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

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

Of course, I'm aware of Dr. Powell's comments. I've chatted with her in the past. We understand the pressure that the front-line health care workers are under, and we've been sympathetic towards it and we're trying to be creative with them to not just meet their acute needs immediately but, more importantly, to them and to their patients, but also to create medium- and long-term solutions for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. During this time of disruption, as you've heard me say many times before, is the time to get creative about long-term, sustainable solutions.

I take Dr. Powell's point – I take it, I understand it and I'm sympathetic towards it. We are working towards acute solutions for her, her colleagues and, most importantly, the patients in Central Newfoundland, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The doctor goes on to describe a woman who recently lost her family doctor, questioning how she can get a Pap test. The doctor warns of cervical cancer screening rates of Newfoundland and Labrador are – quote – horrendously low due to a lack of access. Here's another quote: Even one death from a preventable cancer is one too many.

I ask the Premier: How can patients without a family doctor be confident their illness will be properly monitored without a family doctor?

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

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

We, of course, understand the pressures that are on the health care system now, particularly with primary care. We appreciate that. We think right now is the time to disrupt the paradigm and create a new one, based on evidence. That's why we launched the Health Accord NL, which, of course, the Opposition was involved in, had a seat at the table on.

We understand that we need to recreate the paradigm for family doctors so not only are they providing care for their patients, but they're meeting their full professional capacity. They're fully respected by this government, Mr. Speaker. We want to be there with them, working with them. In fact, I'm meeting with the NLMA tomorrow to see if there is anything else we can do in terms of an acute strategy to help fill the gap, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, some of these situations are long standing, they're chronic and they will take some time to fill, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Speaker, health care workers throughout the Central region and, in fact, throughout our province are overworked and gone well beyond the breaking point. Speaker, these issues did not develop overnight and, after seven years, have reached a breaking point.

I ask the Premier: Does this sound like a health care system well handled by your minister?

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

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

Of course, as I've said in this House and outside this House many times, I recognize that the system is broken. I've worked in it; I understand it. I've seen the nurses at their end. I've seen doctors at their end. I've seen colleagues at their end. We understand that.

That is a narrative that is right now across not even just our country, it's across the North – it's across the world, actually, in terms of the stress and strain on the health care system because of the pandemic. That said, when I came in it was one of the first things that we did, Mr. Speaker, as a government. We launched Health Accord NL to seek input from all stakeholders so that we recognize this time of challenge equally is the time and opportunity to harness the new, innovative ways to provide health care during the pandemic to make sure that we're providing sustainable health care to all people of the province well into the future, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Well, Premier, after seven years these plans are not working. A hundred thousand Newfoundlanders and Labradorians without a family physician; 6,000 to 8,000 backlogged surgeries here; 20 per cent of rural physicians leaving Newfoundland and Labrador, burnt-out health professionals – Mr. Speaker, this plan is not working. Something has to be done to do the right thing for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have heard on numerous occasions that health care workers in our province do not feel they are being listened to by this government nor by the Minister of Health. The result: a health care system in crisis. The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, the Nurses' Union, NAPE, CUPE, paramedics, pharmacists, allied health professionals and pretty much every resident in Newfoundland and Labrador feels that the health care system is ready to collapse.

I ask the Premier: Will you do the right thing and replace your Minister of Health to get health care on the right track?

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

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

As I've already said, we recognize the problems that exist in health care. We recognize that there are challenges. We recognize the stress and strain that every physician, every nurse, every allied health professional is under, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you from talking to every single premier – I talked to Premier Horgan yesterday about the CHT. He's feeling it in British Columbia. They're feeling it across the Maritimes. They're feeling it in every province, Mr. Speaker. It's not unique to us.

I understand by the way that that is cold comfort for patients waiting, and that's why we launched the Health Accord NL and we're also looking to work on acute, immediate solutions for the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**C. TIBBS:** The time shouldn't be now to get creative; you've had seven years to get creative. The time should have been led up to this now.

Speaker, my office is in contact, and myself, with a man currently sitting in a hallway at the hospital in Grand Falls-Windsor, with nine other patients in the hallway. Here is a quote from this patient: There are no physicians in a lot of rural communities in Central, so all patients are being admitted to the regional hospital in Grand Falls-Windsor. This creates triple the workload for the same number of staff.

I ask the Premier: Do you see the effects your inactions in health care recruitment have had in our hospitals, and what are we going to do to help these nine patients today?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much for the question, Speaker.

We recognize the strains and stresses that have been put on acute care over the course of COVID, and indeed, as recently as recent weeks, I spoke with the president of the RNU about the issue of hallways. I was speaking with the CEO of Central Health today; she has a stabilization plan. Her first priority is to clear the corridors in the emergency department, and she and her senior team have put together a credible plan to achieve this within the next couple of weeks.

They also provide extensive support virtually and in person to those areas that are currently experiencing challenges in recruitment. Central Health have recruited 36 physicians in the last two years, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you.

Premier, I can respect if you don't want to answer my questions, but at least have the courage to stand up and answer the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans today.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Lead.

Speaker, we are beyond a crisis in the Central region – beyond. But we know so many other parts of this province are feeling the same strain within their health care centres as well. The minister has had seven years with this government to listen to the warnings from health care professionals across this province, yet the crisis persists.

I ask the Premier, please: How can you lead health care when you're so out of touch and what are we going to do today?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Mr. Speaker, never let it be said that I ignored a question from the

Member opposite. So I'll answer this one, and happy to.

The actions I've taken since being here, Mr. Speaker, are recognizing the challenges that are at hand and looking at opportunities to recreate a sustainable health care system. We recognize the old system does not work, frankly. We spend the most per person per year on health care out of any province – any province – and we have the worst health outcomes. So to continue to invest in old paradigms is simply not the evidence that we're going to use to drive the new system.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** We're going to continue to recognize the opportunity to create a new system for sustainable health care delivery to the people of our province, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I'm glad to see the Premier reference the Health Accord, because the Health Accord talks about a need and a time for change in health care. I'd suggest to the Premier that it's a time for a change in Health ministers.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** I have been contacted by a senior in my district who will be better off by the changes that are announced in the budget by \$377 for the entire year. That's \$30 a month. In the meantime, they're filling up their oil tank at a rate of an extra \$300 a month.

So I ask the minister: Why are you continuing to let seniors fall further and further behind with a budget that is out of touch and has missed the mark?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

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

Speaker, we've talked about, in this Legislature over the last couple of days, the benefits that have been put in place by the Finance Minister and by our government in this year's budget. The heat rebate has been rolled into the Seniors' Benefit and the Income Supplement in previous years by this government to ensure that it has been stabilized, has been permanent in those supplements for those individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Member again on the other side: Is it the rebate on tax insurance that he'd eliminate; the Metrobus passes that he'd eliminate; the Income Supplement increases or the Seniors' Benefit increases that he'd eliminate? What would he eliminate that we have put in place?

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, the minister's own Premier and Minister of Finance have said in the House that their plan was not enough.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** They have said that their plan is not enough. So there was nothing new in the budget for seniors. So I ask again – the seniors are spending more and more money per month on home heat. They are falling further and further behind. The Premier says he won't apologize for trying to help our seniors.

Will the Premier apologize for failing them, to address their needs, and missing the mark?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

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

What we have done in our government, Speaker, is ensured that rate mitigation prevents home heating from doubling.

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

**T. OSBORNE:** The gift that was left by the party opposite, Speaker, was a doubling of people's home heating. We've prevented that, Speaker, by ensuring that rate mitigation at \$500 million – I believe it was about \$2,400 a year for these individuals has not happened. It would have happened under that plan on the other side.

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

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

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

Just to be clear, on record, the Minister of Education voted for Muskrat Falls.

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

**B. PETTEN:** That's not theatre, Mr. Speaker, that's fact.

If you want to find some savings, we've spent \$600,000 yesterday. The Premier might lose his ride, but it will be a few more dollars for the home heat rebate to seniors. You're looking for savings; we can find more. We'll tell you later on.

Speaker, our offices have heard from parents of students at Leary's Brook Junior High in St. John's who feel betrayed by government over ballooning class sizes in Grade 7, late French immersion.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader is chirpy today.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** He is.

**B. PETTEN:** Yeah, he is.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Get on with the question, please.

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, in September, the class size in Grade 6 will go from 22 to 34 in Grade 7 and still have a wait-list.

How does the minister believe this is a suitable learning environment for 12-year-olds learning an entirely new language?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

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

I will address the preamble by the Member opposite. Yes, I was duped by that party into thinking that Muskrat Falls was a good deal, as were a number of other people.

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

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

**T. OSBORNE:** There are a number of reasons I left that party, Mr. Speaker, and that was one of them. They'd had everybody convinced that it was a good deal when in fact it wasn't.

But I would suggest that he check the record, because there were two bills. I said I was going to vote for one and against the other. Tell you how upfront they are, Mr. Speaker. They actually called the vote while I was gone for supper, so I actually didn't vote for it.

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

**T. OSBORNE:** In terms of French immersion students, Mr. Speaker, I know that the English School District look at the need, look at the number of students within a school and determine the needs for French immersion –

**SPEAKER:** The minister's time has expired.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Mr. Speaker, I'll sum that up really quickly. I have a great friendship in CBS. Do you know what he says, a job to fool you – doesn't take much to fool you. The Minister of Education just proved it. If he got duped by a crowd in this House, it doesn't take much to fool you, Minister.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That's true.

**B. PETTEN:** No, he's living proof; he admitted it.

Speaker, this has been an issue for several years, and pleas from the local MHA and government have fallen on deaf ears. Speaker, even more frustrating is the fact that those on the wait-list are not eligible to apply in subsequent years, and parents of Grade 5's now making their choice to enrol have no idea how the class size will balloon and you're not even guaranteed a seat.

So, Speaker, again, why is the cap size of 34 acceptable to the minister?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

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

I'm not sure I understood the Member's question in terms of the class size of 34, or the cap of 34. I believe he was talking about French immersion. I know again the English School District look at the enrolment in a school to determine whether or not it is a viable program within that school.

But I do also know that it's a priority of this government and of the English School District to offer French immersion where the numbers warrant.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The federal Fisheries minister this past winter came under fire when she suggested harvesters leave as many fish in the water as possible and grow vegetation in the ocean to combat climate change. Speaker, to insist harvesters – quote – would have to accept this sacrifice is ridiculous.

Last week the federal Fisheries minister blindsided the minister and industry by putting a moratorium on the mackerel fishery in this province.

I ask the minister: Why are you letting your federal cousin decide the future of our fisheries?

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

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

I feel privileged and honoured to stand and answer this one today. I have not so much a prop, but I'll table this for the Member if he wants to. Is sinking carbon the best, or carbon to sink? It's all about kelp. So let's talk about that, but let's talk about the fishery most importantly. Last Monday, there was a protest on the steps out here. I stood in front of these people. I didn't see anybody from your side of the House stand up and represent the fishery.

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

**D. BRAGG:** I stood there with those people. I stood by their side, because I know these people. So I wouldn't mind if you like to answer some questions, and ask me some great questions. Let's talk about outside buyers. Let's put it out there. I ask you, where do you stand on outside buyers? Where does your party stand on outside buyers?

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Mr. Speaker, I was in the health care system at that time, which I'll speak to in a future – not at this point in time, so I could not attend. But I assure that if any other gathering that do attend outside, I will surely make that at that time.

The minister didn't answer the question, Mr. Speaker. No answer. He had met after she had made the comment with the Premier, and then he disclosed that he had confidence in what the federal Fisheries minister had said. Maybe he can share with what the minister said for him to instill confidence in for the fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador.

What exactly did the minister say to instill confidence?

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

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

Once again, it's a privilege to talk about the staple of our economy, the fishery. A billion-dollar enterprise last year alone – a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker. One of the biggest mega work programs in this province.

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

**D. BRAGG:** The hon. minister is like any minister in any Cabinet. With a great staff and with good science, they make good decisions. Will it always be favoured? Maybe not, but they make their decisions based on the science. And because we have to trust their judgment on the science, that's their job.

As everybody knows the federal government, they control our quotas. We control the fishery when it comes onshore. So the processing side, talk to us every day of the week. On the quota side, I will defend the minister in her decisions, because her decisions are based on the science of the fishery, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Mr. Speaker, we don't catch enough groundfish to operate one plant in Newfoundland and Labrador for year-round. So I'm saying I don't know where the confidence would come in the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador, and luckily, we're getting a good return in price for our shellfish. Other than that, we would be in a sad state.

I ask the minister: Instead of making apologies for his federal Liberal cousin from British Columbia, why is our minister sitting quietly by while she forges ahead with her plan to cover 50 per cent of our oceans with marine protected areas by 2050 that would destroy the fishery as we know it?

I ask the minister: Why are you supporting Minister Murray's decision? And maybe that's what you're tabling to the House, the prop you had just displayed.

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

**D. BRAGG:** Mr. Speaker, again, talk about the fish, I do it all day long. I am so proud of the fisher people in this province.

The Member opposite asked several questions. Let's talk about plant operations. In the history of this province, I don't know if we have ever had a plant that was running 52 weeks of the year. But let's talk about Alberto Wareham's plant in Arnolds Cove, Mr. Speaker.

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

**D. BRAGG:** One of the most profitable and prosperous fish plants in this province.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Oh, oh!

**D. BRAGG:** Talk about chirping, Mr. Speaker. A little protection here, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**D. BRAGG:** A little protection, please.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**D. BRAGG:** I had the privilege to go through these fish plants, Mr. Speaker. I've seen the technology, I've seen the investment and I stand behind what we're doing in our fishery. I stand behind the harvesters and I stand behind the producers because this is an industry that we need to protect, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I look forward to a little bit more clarification from the hon. minister on that.

Speaker, *Budget 2022* allocates \$1.88 million for new fire trucks for the province.

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

**J. WALL:** Last year – don't go cheering yet.

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

**J. WALL:** Last year's budget was \$2.7 million, the year before that was \$3 million and the year before that was \$2.9 million. Yet, in Estimates, the minister said – and I quote – I don't think it's an increase – end of quote. Speaker, that is indeed a reduction of almost \$1 million.

I ask the minister: Can he please justify why there was a reduction for funding for new fire trucks? There will be so many communities in need of a new fire truck. Can you tell me which ones are going to do without?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you.

I am so pleased that *Budget 2022* had millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars for public safety in this province.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Certainly, things within the responsibility of the provincial government like the RCMP and a brand new provincial radio system that will allow all first responders to communicate so that every Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in this province is safer today than they were last week.

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

**J. HOGAN:** I understand that the responsibilities of the municipalities of this province to deal with their own fire issues can be tight sometimes with regard to money. That's why the provincial government helps them and assists them with funding that they are required to do to fulfill their duties to their municipalities and that's what that \$1.8 million is for. We're working with our partners in the municipalities to help them when needed so that they can live up to their obligations in their communities.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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



**J. WALL:** Speaker, we all know where the money came for the radios. We heard about that in the House last week.

The other thing is with respect to a decrease in fire department funding for trucks, it does hurt the municipalities and it does affect the safety of all residents. A reduction of funding means a reduction in coverage.

The minister said it was not the responsibility of the department, but only to assist municipalities to doing so. There are more municipalities who need support than what will be received.

So how many municipalities this year, Minister, are going to be turned down for a new vehicle?

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

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

I can tell you that the \$1.8 million that is given out to municipalities, I don't think they'll turn down one cent of that. So we're very happy to contribute \$1.8 million towards funding for municipalities to ensure fire services are moving forward in this province and that people are safe. And that's on top of the tens of millions of dollars in *Budget 2022* for public safety in this province.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

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

In Estimates, the minister said that the seismic program was cancelled this year, in part because of fiscal reasons.

**A. PARSONS:** Paused.

**L. PARROTT:** I'll say paused.

However, in '18 when Nalcor tried to cut seismic to save money, the Liberal Cabinet directed it to go on.

I ask the minister: If there's no data collected this year, what will we use to support next year's bids?

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

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

I apologize to my colleague for interrupting him to make sure we had a clarification on the right word, because cancelled indicates something other than paused and what we do have is a pause right now.

The reality is that there's been a lot of tremendous work done over a number of years when it comes to seismic work in our offshore, both 2-D and 3-D. There's been a decision made this year, given the inventory that's been built up and the analysis that's currently ongoing, that we could afford to take a pause this year.

Now, I know that it's caused concern from Members opposite, but what I can say is that we've had the same reaction from our offshore companies and our operators as well as some people in the industry who've reached out to me in meetings to say that they absolutely understand.

So, again, we all want to continue this, hopefully, in the future; right now, again, is just a pause. But we had to make a proper fiscal decision based on the information we have in front of us.

Thank you.

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

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

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

MTAP continues to fail as a program. Instead of ensuring equal access to medical services, over the last seven years this government added more paperwork and more requirements to access funding. This is discrimination to Labradorians and a tiered health care for those with serious health issues making multiple trips to the Island.

I ask the minister: Which cuts to health care from the Greene report will finally create a program that meets the needs and realities of Labradorians living with health issues?

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

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

The department operates two programs, one is for income support clients and that's a full payment plan. The other is a Medical Transportation Assistance Program, which is meant to assist with the cost of travel. We have made significant changes to enhance access to funds upfront, flights, mileage, hotel accommodation, per diems, principally for Labradorians but also for Newfoundlanders as well.

We continue to evaluate the program on a year-by-year basis and look to see if we can make a really good program even better. But, again, we operate within the fiscal constraints left to us by the problems of 2014 and before.

Thank you.

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

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

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

This government had seven years, but attempts to retain doctors in Labrador continue to fail. There is less services available now than ever before in Labrador. More people are forced to spend thousands of dollars they don't have to get medical treatment on the Island.

I ask the Premier: Is this the transformation he wants for Labradorians of this province or for the health care system for Labradorians?

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

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

I appreciate the Member's passion on this subject and I understand some of the

frustrations. Rural, remote and isolated medicine and health care is a challenge in this province and it's a major challenge across similar areas in the entire country. We are not alone. I would argue we have managed the situation as well, if not better, than most.

Health Accord NL gives us and will give us an operational blueprint in the coming weeks to help us see what changes, what new examples, what paradigm shifts – to quote the Premier's words – we can employ to make life easier for those people in remote areas who need health care.

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

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

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

This government's reduction on the debt was thanks in large part to miners in Labrador West and miners generations before us, but this budget ignores our seniors who want to age with dignity in a place they call home. The minister stated he was working with them. I have been told otherwise by the group that represents seniors in our regions.

I ask again: When will Labrador be treated with the dignity and respect for the billions of dollars we put into this province's Treasury?

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

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

We certainly are – where we can and how we can – supporting seniors throughout the province. I appreciate in Labrador West there are particular challenges right now with housing. We're working with the coalition there. We've invested money in housing in Labrador West and we want to work with private developers and others to meet the current and emerging needs.

The community is changing. We recognize that the seniors who have built the community want to stay and we want to support them in staying.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of residents in the Corner Brook and Bay of Islands area without a family doctor. They are tired of waiting up to eight to 10 hours at the emergency department. They can't get their prescriptions filled, referrals for tests, driver's licence renewed and many other medical appointments.

Three nurse practitioners, Lacey Sparks, Laurence McCarthy and Travis Sheppard, have set up office in Corner Brook. They are providing a much-needed service to the people in need. They have no provincial funding and seeking to be able to bill MCP instead of having the patients to pay a fee. They have huge overhead equipment costs.

I ask the Minister of Health and Community Services: Will you work with these three individuals to ensure that they can bill MCP to keep these vital services viable for the Corner Brook-Bay of Islands area?

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

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

I'm aware of the matter, which is raised by the unaffiliated Member opposite. In actual fact, as recently as this lunchtime, I had communication from the Registered Nurses' Union, who is the bargaining agent for nurse practitioners, to open or resume discussions that were suspended because of COVID around how to compensate nurse practitioners. She and I are agreed that we need to integrate them fully into a primary care service that makes sense and serves the people well.

For the reference of the Member opposite, Patient Connect NL will open to residents of Western Newfoundland before the summer starts and a Collaborative Team Clinic will be established on the West Coast early in the fall at the latest, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very innovative solution: to work with Western Health and the Department of Health and Community Services to provide much-needed services. We need these services now on the West Coast. I ask the minister if he can provide a short-term arrangement until a long-term solution is found.

This government has asked and is willing to help with new innovative solutions. Mr. Minister, this is a very much-needed service, so I'm asking: Instead of saying it can't be done now, find a way to make it happen to help the people in the Corner Brook and Bay of Islands area with their most precious asset: their health.

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

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

Back in 2019, I believe it was, myself and the then president of the Registered Nurses' Union, Debbie Forward, had a discussion about nurse practitioner-lead clinics, which is what the Member opposite describes. We had those discussions. We started down a road of looking at models that we could employ. COVID kind of got in the way a little bit there.

In terms of primary care, the key is integration. The key from the Health Accord, it's quite obvious at the moment, is all around making sure there's a seamless single point of entry for the health care system. Certainly happy to work with any group. We've engaged the RNU again to renew these discussions and we will work with them at the pace they set.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### Tabling of Documents

**SPEAKER:** I do have one.

In accordance with subsection 41(1) of the *House of Assembly Act* and subsection 38(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity, and Administration Act*, I am tabling the report of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards entitled: *Joyce Report, April 12, 2022*.

Any other tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

The reasons for this petition are:

WHEREAS individual residents and municipal leaders have spoken to the deplorable road conditions in the District of Harbour Main; and

WHEREAS the district is made up of many smaller communities and towns like Holyrood, Upper Gullies, Seal Cove, Cupids, Colliers, South River, North River, Roaches Line, Makinsons and other roads in desperate need of repair and paving; and

WHEREAS these roads see high-volume traffic flows every day, and drivers can expect potholes, severe rutting, limited shoulders and many washed out areas along the way;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately take the necessary steps to repair and repave these important roadways to ensure

the safety of the driving public who use them on a regular basis.

Speaker, today I speak of a very extreme case that has happened in the District of Harbour Main. They are facing a hazardous road condition; in particular, Point Road in Chapel's Cove has been washed out again. The guardrails are hanging in the air from erosion. It borders on the ocean. There's a serious concern that vehicles may end up driving over the bank. This is not a new phenomenon. This issue has been ongoing for several years and it occurs after every heavy rainfall, the road washes out.

Speaker, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure is aware of this serious condition. They've made superficial fixes over the years but to no avail. The problem keeps reoccurring. The main concern here, Speaker, is the public safety. When residents are going out to put up pylons and barricades themselves, that surely demonstrates that government is failing in its responsibility to keep these roadways safe for residents who drive over them.

This is unacceptable. I can advise that our office in Harbour Main has made numerous inquires. February 11, we submitted an inquiry to the department with pictures. We sent it to the depot. We sent it to the superintendent of operations, to the ADM, the DM; we advised them of the seriousness of the washout. We asked, why is this road not being closed? There are school buses travelling over this road. We asked when the issue would be addressed and repaired; no response. Again we followed up on the 15th of February, another email to the same recipients. Depot advised – what is happening? They are waiting for engineering to come back to look into this issue.

We then went further to the EA. We were told that this is an executive-level decision, and yet nothing has happened. They are aware of it. If anything happens –

**SPEAKER:** The hon. Member's time has expired.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** – they'll be responsible.

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

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

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

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

I'm presenting a petition to defer the decision to allow logging in the Gander area watershed.

The reason for the petition: Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Limited has applied to harvest timber in Charlie's Place, a 63-square-kilometre piece of land in the catchment area for the Northwest and Southwest Gander Rivers. The area is a hunting ground for the local Indigenous population. Residents are concerned that logging activity will –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

We can't hear the petition.

**J. DINN:** I'm using my teacher voice, Sir.

Residents are concerned that logging activity will devastate the local ecology and compromise the drinking water supply; and.

WHEREAS the unique conditions of Charlie's Place provide an ideal habitat for thousands of plant species as well as fish and waterfowl. The local population will be increasingly reliant on hunting on this land to offset the increasing cost of living in the province; and

WHEREAS removal of the old-growth forest in the area would destroy these conditions and destabilize the soil, causing silt deposits to infiltrate the river system, causing further damage;

WHEREAS over 15,000 residents between Glenwood, Appleton, Gander Bay and Gander rely on this watershed for its water supply, and only a small amount of fuel, hydraulic oil, or other particles could contaminate the system;

WHEREUPON the undersigned – some 148 petitioners – your petitioners call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to defer the

decision to allow Corner Brook Pulp and Paper past the deadline of April 15 to allow for a more fulsome discussion, to make it a protected area under WERAC and ban commercial cutting.

Speaker, the key thing here is the people wouldn't have contacted me except that they felt that the department did not perform due diligence, did not give a fair hearing, and ignored the people who are most directly affected in this, and that they did not consult all the pertinent stakeholders.

So what they're asking for now is that the Department of Environment and Climate Change look at pausing this and giving the people an opportunity to air their concerns.

As I understand it, an application has been made to the department and there is going to be a meeting. I hope that the minister will sit in on that and hear the concerns that they have. They do have solutions and they just want this area preserved for the people in that area, the people who are most affected by this.

Thank you.

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the petition but more importantly, I thank the people for coming forward with a petition about this important issue to them.

Obviously, we have heard some concerns from stakeholders regarding Zone 3. The proponent of this was released from the EA process with conditions on October 22, 2021, one in which Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, as the hon Member has identified, had to engage with stakeholders that submitted to the EA process to submit stakeholder engagement report to the process for approval to the minister. That is in process right now.

I know that they have met on at least two occasions with the proponent that is being discussed in the petition and there is another

meeting scheduled for this month, I think, or in the early part of May.

I do take the petition under advisement for sure. I look forward to hearing the results of the stakeholder engagement report, which is a condition of release of the process anyway.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

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

Mr. Speaker, the reasons for this petition are as follows:

The resident of the Town of Terra Nova are troubled with the unsafe conditions of the roads and the lack of maintenance on the roads that are maintained by Transportation and Infrastructure.

Therefore we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to repair and maintain these roads to a standard that is safe to travel by all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the road to Terra Nova last year was voted the worse road in Atlantic Canada. In my opinion, it probably shouldn't have achieved that standard because there is no road there to vote on. It is absolutely terrible.

Sometime ago I reached out to the department and I asked how they measured whether or not a road is suitable and they said from the centre line to the curb, based on the amount of asphalt that is left. Well, if you want to go in to Terra Nova you will quickly see the only thing left to the road is the centre line. That is it. There is nothing else.

The road drops off in places 20 inches. It is incredibly unsafe. There are school buses that travel it and multiple vehicles on a daily basis. But what's more troublesome is the amount of quarry activity that's in there, which pays royalties back to the government; the amount of logging that's in there that pays royalties back to the government; and Nalcor is in there on a daily

basis with all the heavy big rigs and it's tearing the roads up even worse than they are.

This road needs to be fixed. It's not a road that can be patched or maintained, it needs to be redone. The road is entirely gone and somebody will die on this road.

Every single day we're getting reports of windshields broke out, flat tires, people actually having to drive off the road to avoid oncoming traffic because of the state of the road. At some point, government needs to take some responsibility and make a commitment to fix this road.

I see the minister over there shaking his head, so I guess that means he may do that. At the end of the day, if he wants to meet with me out there, I'm more than willing to go there and meet with him, much the same as he did in Baie Verte. We can see if we can get this road done. I look forward to that time.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. DWYER:** Thank you, Speaker.

The background of this petition is as follows:

Whereas there are very little operations currently at the Bull Arm Fabrication Site and there was just an announcement on Bay du Nord. I'm presenting this petition again on the Bull Arm site to the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology to give the people of, not only my district because it's very important obviously to my district having the facility in my district, but to give an update to the province of what the initial plans are to get Bay du Nord moving and hopefully that will include the Kiewit facility in Marystown.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

Oh, sorry, a response by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I appreciate the Member opposite's petition. What I can say at this time is very similar to what I've said in the past. I will point out – and I appreciate that I've had an opportunity to speak to the Member, his colleague and various community leaders in that area about this issue, which I think is important that we have ongoing communication with our municipal leaders. As well, I have to give the MP credit; he was also a part of that.

The long story short is that right now we are still early on. Obviously, this project has not reached sanction per se. We still have some time to figure this out. We have to work on impacts, benefit agreements, how exactly is this going to go.

So even though we had good news, there is still a significant amount of work left to be done. But we are extremely happy to have something like Bull Arm, an asset of the province that even though underused, underutilized over the last couple of years, it's an asset that we were not prepared to give away, even though people came in and wanted to avail of it. We do have some things undergoing work there now. We know the Terra Nova put some work there and we have some things that we are currently working on.

So the best I can advise the Member at this time is that it is top of mind with our department. We'd always like to see it busier than it is, but I do have a good feeling about the future of the site as well as our industry going forward.

Thank you.

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Whereas avid hunters are prevented from using the calibre .22 centre firearm in hunting coyotes during the fall moose season, the success of the

hunt is severely compromised. It appears that law-abiding hunters keeping the coyote population in check are being labelled as potential moose poachers, which led to this restriction being put in place.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to allow the calibre .22 centre firearm to be used regardless of whether it's moose season or not, in order to more humanely and effectively hunt and control the coyote population in rural Newfoundland.

I am no hunter, Mr. Speaker, and I know that this is a domain that I'm not totally familiar with, but after speaking with a couple of hunters, I've come to realize that during the moose hunting season, they are left with shooting and trying to get a coyote with a 12 gauge. And all the avid hunters and those who've got experience in hunting would be the first to tell you that it is not humane, it doesn't have the distance to be able to reach the coyote, which is a job to get close to. They automatically default that the government has them labelled as potential poachers and therefore the calibre of their hunt is greatly diminished.

The only thing on the humane side, Mr. Speaker, that we would look at is if the scattered shot of the 12 gauge injures the animal, then I would think it's unjust that that animal be able to go and suffer in the wilderness in rural Newfoundland. So the only thing I would ask, if there's another condition other than them being labelled as potential moose hunters that would restrict them from using the .22 calibre gun, then I would say it would be nice to hear that here in the House.

And if there isn't, then I would say let's let them humanely and effectively hunt and control the coyote population by allowing them to use the .22 calibre centre firearm.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fishery, Forestry and Agriculture for response.

**D. BRAGG:** For the record, about 80 per cent of the coyotes are trapped and not shot. So, for the record, just keep that in mind: 80 per cent of the

coyotes that are harvested each year are trapped. The shooting of the .223s and .22-250s are not paying a big factor at all in the harvest of the coyote.

Thank you.

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

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

Speaker, the province's population has aged much more rapidly than any other province in the country over the last 50 years.

The number of persons over 65 years of age has more than doubled over the past 30 years.

Many aging couples have been assessed and deemed eligible for a placement in a long-term care facility and require different levels of care and are separated into different facilities in order to get the care they require in a timely manner.

Having support and assistance as close to their home and community as possible should be a key objective in developing and providing services to our seniors. As well, individuals want choice in living in a place that maximizes their independence.

Couples who have supported each other should not have to face being separated when they enter long-term care. Keeping them together ensures a better quality of life.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to enact legislation that allows couples stay together, even as they age, at the highest level of care.

Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that our population is aging. We have all seen cases and instances where couples have been separated, who have been married for many, many years and die alone. We need to do better. In the House today we heard the Premier and we heard the Minister of Health and Community Services applaud the Health Accord, and we applaud it too – a great piece of work.

In that Health Accord, it talks about strengthening provincial legislation, regulation and policy to provide the care and protection for older people. We just had this piece of work done, a very credible piece of work done. We have an aging population. We should have legislation in place, like other provinces, that allow our seniors the dignity, the respect and the ability to make choices and die together – be together when they pass on. That's what we're asking for. Our seniors matter.

**SPEAKER:** The deputy to the Deputy Government House Leader.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

Sorry about the confusion but I'm wearing several hats today, and currently I'm deputy Deputy Government House Leader.

I call Orders of the Day. From that, I call Motion 1, that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

#### Orders of the Day

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

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

Speaker, it's always a pleasure to stand in this House, stand in our place, which we've been doing all this week, as response to the budget. We, as Members of the House of Assembly, have that privilege, I guess, when we stand here to speak about the issues that – not only what's in the budget but the issues in our own districts, and issues that are facing the people in the province. I've always said it that every one of us here are very honoured to have that privilege to represent our districts. We probably don't say it enough. I think about it often. It's quite an honour.

I guess sometimes when you get caught into the day to day of politics, it becomes a lifestyle and it becomes what you do every day – it's not only a Monday to Friday, as we all know; it's Saturday, Sunday and most every holiday and weeknight and weekend. I guess that sometimes you step back. I try to do that on times. I probably don't do enough of it, but sometimes



you step back and you realize what the responsibility you've been given. We're entrusted with a lot of responsibility. As a Legislature, you have a government there that's sitting with a majority right now, but you're responsible for over \$9 billion in spending.

The end of the day, if you have a majority government, they'll vote whichever way they're choosing. I mean they're going to vote for their budgets; we know that. But that doesn't mean that we don't have a role to play. That doesn't mean that people don't listen. That don't mean government are going to listen, but the people of the province hear us speak out, loud and clear.

My colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port, our shadow minister of Finance, has been doing a great job on highlighting the cost-of-living problems in the province – cost-of-living problems in his district, in my district, in every Member in this House, their districts. In government, you can't speak on that. You'd like to; I know they would, but they can't and it's the nature. No matter what, that comes with party politics and you support your government. I'm sure, behind the scenes, they may have the same conversations we have in this public Chamber. But ultimately, our role is to look out for the people that put us in these places, in these seats. I know every one of us, the 40 of us in here do that, and we do it with pride. But that doesn't absolve you, no matter where you are in this House, of the issues facing our province.

In my own district, I'd like to touch on that for a minute before I move on to many other things I have to talk about, or want to talk about. I have a district that's just outside the City of St. John's. It's almost 30,000 people; it's a beautiful town. We all call our districts beautiful, and they are; every part of the province is beautiful. But it's a district that has no medical services. Not only a family doctor shortage – and it's been recognized by the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association as being one of the highest percentage of people without a family doctor. We have no medical services. I challenge you to go to many other parts of the province and find an area encompassing that many people with no medical services.

We're in Corner Brook building a hospital that's well over billion dollars, in excess of billion

dollars, with nowhere near the same population of Conception Bay South. Even their area, even their broader areas, they're the service area for the larger region. I'd hazard to guess it would be a challenge to get up to the numbers where we're dealing to in CBS.

You can't get a test done. The only thing you'd get done in CBS is blood work. You pay for it. It's a private blood work collection company. They're great. They are on the bottom of my street and I support them. They're good people. But not everyone can do that. Not everyone can afford that. Why do you have to pay for that when it's offered free in our public health facilities? But they have no choice; you have to drive out to the Health Sciences Centre, Major's Path or St. Clare's. They don't have access to it, and a lot of times you can't get there. At the end of the day, it's just as well to spend \$20 on your blood work up there, instead of driving to St. John's, especially at \$2 a litre.

I mean, it's good for their business. That's all I have – and I've said this publicly. I've written the minister. I've questioned it in the House here. I've put out news releases. We did meet with the Health Accord and over and over and over again emphasized the needs of Conception Bay South.

I don't expect to have an acute care hospital built in Kelligrews or Long Pond; that's not what I'm looking for. I'm looking for some access to services, because it's kind of a mental block, I think, in a lot of officials' minds where CBS is located; we're the metro area. But if you have no public transit, the only way you get there is by a vehicle whether it's a taxi or a private vehicle, no other way. We're cut off from everything else. There's nothing else there.

I mean if you haven't got those means to get there – a taxi ride is well over \$100. Not everyone can afford that. If you don't meet the requirement for MTAP, which the criteria for that needs to be changed – and that's another letter I've got gone into the minister.

That's the real issues. We can look at a lot of other things that we talk about day to day here in the House or whatever. I'm speaking in my spot now for Conception Bay South. My colleague, our leader, talked about his District of

Conception Bay East - Bell Island. Our shadow minister for Finance will talk about his District of Stephenville - Port au Port. My colleague, Deputy Opposition House Leader, will talk about her District of Harbour Main. We have the same issues. They're just different contexts. They may be, you know, different – some may have some services. Ultimately, when you go out and talk to people, what do you hear? Health care, cost of living – every one of us in this House.

Not about NASCAR, and I'm not going to beat up on NASCAR; I could go down rabbit holes on almost any topic. I think, Speaker, you're well aware of that, that I'm capable of doing that, but I try my best to stay out of them rabbit holes. On the NASCAR, Come Home Year, I'm not against those things, not a bit. I never have been. I've said, and I've said this publicly as well, especially Come Home Year, not a bad idea, just not now – timing.

NASCAR's not a bad idea. Timing, though, is bad. There's no one here in this House of Assembly – I'm not into NASCAR, but no one in this House of Assembly thinks it's a bad thing. But not now. When the former PC administration were in government and times were good, there were a lot of good things that came here, that were funded through Tourism, that I had the pleasure of being in that department for a number of years. I know a lot of people still there – a lot have retired but a lot of them are still there. They do great work; I have nothing but good things to say about Tourism.

A lot of great things happened over the years, but it was different times. There were surpluses. The Juno Awards came here; everyone applauded it. It was a huge success. We had Atlantic Canada House. We were a participant in the Olympics and we were ground zero, so to speak, with the Olympic Games. There was an investment; sure it was. No one questioned it. Because we were in surplus. Things were good. The economy was hot. The oil industry was booming. People were working. You're not going to get people complaining when the price of gas was 50 or 60 cents a litre, home heating fuel was probably 30, 40, 50, 60 cents a litre, probably less.

Times were good. Nobody questioned that. I don't even know if the current Liberals of the day and the Opposition really questioned that. I think most people understood it's not a bad investment. It's an economic spin-off that's a driver. It's promoting our province. It's who we were. We promoted the province. I mean at the Olympic Games, Newfoundland stood proud up there in Atlantic Canada House. It was largely seen as one of the most successful visited houses in Olympic Village at the time for Canada, and this was Atlantic Canada.

And a lot of it, and I'm not being biased, is they wanted to come to see the Newfoundland people – the bands, the music, the personalities of Newfoundlanders. We're not just unique to here, everywhere. People tend to like our company and they visited that house. It was record numbers and it was a huge success. I didn't hear many people complain about that. And why would you? There was no reason to complain.

But when you fast-forward to 2022 – and we've seen this for the last number of years; we've been told this since 2016, the sky was falling. So you get to 2022 and we're pushing \$2 a litre for furnace oil, \$2 a litre for gasoline, a lot of seniors cannot afford to eat food, they can't afford to heat their homes and they cannot afford to drive their vehicles. Let's be honest. My colleague here, the Leader of the Opposition, said yesterday a senior would rather stay in their seat, not move. A senior will say, I got to decide if I eat less food or I turn the heat up.

That sounds nice when you're trying to emphasize your point, but I think we all hear that. I think every one of us hear that. If we don't – there may be a few districts in the province or around the city area have a higher income level and base income. I know some of those districts, and good on them, but my district feels it. There are pockets in CBS – it's all over the place, but a lot of my district is the rural side. People struggle.

One of the biggest issues I have in my district now in 2022 is affordable housing. The biggest issue I get coming to my door now is people looking for affordable housing. Does that sound like a district that's flush with money? No, but I can go around the turn and I can find people that can well afford to pay \$1,500 to fill up their oil

barrel – not everyone and not every district in this province. I'm sure my district is comparable, probably even a little bit better than a lot of others. But these are real issues.

When you turn on the news and you have the Minister of Tourism and the Premier announcing NASCAR, at the right time, I'd be applauding it too. Why not? It's good stuff. The Minister of Tourism said yesterday to my colleague from Harbour Main, you don't want to see 10,000 people come to your district. No, I don't think that's factual at all. That could be no further from the truth. She'd love to see as many come to her district as possible, probably next summer. Right now, she'd like to see the roads fixed in her district so people can drive there without beating their car to pieces to get to see the race. And when the road gets fixed, they're going to have to put gas in their vehicle to get there. That's what people are concerned about now.

By the time they do that, to get the gas in their vehicle and buy some groceries, they can't afford to buy admission tickets to the NASCAR race. It's so backwards. I'm not saying this because I'm over here, I'm a Tory and I can get up and beat off, flash my mouth, and say what I want, because that's not true. If anyone in this House had the free will to speak, you'd do the same thing, but I know everyone can't. It's because the way governments are set up; it's the way the Legislatures are. If we were on the other side and we put in some things in the budget that was critical and my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port was the minister of Finance, we'd be hard pressed to stand up and be critical of something we didn't like in that budget; I get that.

So that's why I qualify it by saying that it's not directed at any Members opposite. I get the way politics works in the province. But I don't think the general public fully understands. My colleague this morning, when he spoke, and done a great job of speaking and one thing he said – and we all forget sometimes and a lot of Members were here when we went to a minority government. People wanted us to collaborate. We had a loud and clear message back then. People in this province were happy to see a minority government. Finally, you have to work

together. People got tired of this us against them. It is tiring.

I've been around politics for a long, long time, back to my teenage years. I was part of MUN YPC when no one even understood what it stood for, but we just decided that was where we'd go. I know no other. And I did another career before I ever went to politics but politics was always near and dear to me.

We sometimes forget the point that the public doesn't get the inner workings. They don't understand. I don't even know if the public votes PC and Liberal as much anymore. I say that with all sincerity because someone said to me the other day, but your district is Tory. I said, yeah, right now. But if I leave, it could go any colour. I don't know if the NDP would get there, with all due respect, but it could go red. I don't know. I know it was red before. Not that it's going to stay blue. I really believe it depends on the individual. It depends on the message coming from the party. It may not be every decision every single day of the week that you're hanging your hopes on.

But it comes from the overall messaging. But, ultimately, it comes from the individual that's on the other side of that door and what message they're selling. It's no fluke anyone in this House gets where they're to. I don't think so much as it is about being Tory or Liberal anymore. I got pockets in my district they don't care. They're voting one way or the other and there's nothing I can do to either make them not vote for me or make them to vote for me. That's the way it is and I think we can all attest to that.

I think sometimes and I've said this in the House – I said it last week, actually, and it bears repeating. I remember a time because I was around – I'm reflecting a lot today; I don't know if that's a sign. Before I was ever elected, I spent a lot of years in the galleries of this place and in the backrooms, so to speak, and I know a couple here would probably be around back then – I remember. And you learn a lot watching. You know you learn a lot really watching out how it all works.

But, ultimately, people don't get it. They don't get it. And I don't think they really care. They care about what's here and now; what's

happening in front of them today; what's affecting them when they go to the store to buy the groceries; when they go to get the gas; when they go to fill up their oil barrel; when they go to pay the property taxes. That's what people find, that's the pinch people are in.

In our economy, the people are not flush with money. That is the reality. But I guess a word of advice to anyone – I guess I'm talking to government when I say: just tell the people the cold hard facts. That's not a bad thing. I know when you're in government that's challenging. That's a real challenge when you're in government to come out and tell people the truth. I don't mean that you're going to mislead them. It's hard sometimes to tell people that cold hard facts.

It's hard sometimes for me as an MHA in the district and you're trying to help someone and you can't help them. You're doing everything possible. You probably reached out to the ministers. You might have even talked to the Premier if it was bad enough, and you couldn't get there. They are the tough ones and you don't want to pick up the phone and call them and tell them the reality is that there is nothing you can do for them. None of us do. But sometimes you have to and it is hard when we do it.

No difference in governing. Tell the people, they might not like it. I know they won't like it, but I think that the new age of governing, what people expect, not only are they not voting for PC or Liberal or an NDP or a person, but they want you to give them the cold hard facts.

Probably the best way for me to qualify this is the budget came down last week. No one in this room wanted to see anything drastic more than me. I didn't want to see layoffs. I didn't want to see cuts. I don't want to see it. I don't want to see people down on their luck. I think the province is struggling enough as it is. I didn't want to see it.

But there was a part of me thinking, you know, government is going to be hard pressed not to. So it was really strange actually, the budget was announced and there was part of you that was almost bittersweet. Part of you was like, okay, well at least people can go home this evening and take a sigh of relief. Because I talk to people

leading into every budget about reality, like I've said, I've been around here a long time, budgets have that ability the day before and the night before and the morning of, people are nervous, especially civil servants or anyone who depends on government.

When I went home, I said that was a good thing. But then was it a good thing? I don't think it was but it is what it is and it's here. This brings us to today and we're here going to debate it. But can I tell people in this province that we just had was a great budget? Again, not right now. Maybe next year it might have been all right, but here and now, it's not. Because we have been led to believe and prepared for the worst. The sky has been falling for years but for some magical way, every time the budget comes around the sky stays in place. That's politics. That's not doing what needs to be done for the province. Like I just said, I'm no different than anyone else; nobody struggles with that more than me. I don't want to see it.

I was here for 2016 and some Members opposite were obviously here the same. That was rough. Did it have to be done? Maybe it could have been done better. We thought there were a lot of decisions made that we didn't agree with. But that's where it stopped.

The proverbial shot was across the bow in 2016: get ready. Everyone had been waiting in dread ever since that time for the next shoe to drop. But for some reason it's never dropped.

Again, I'm not advocating for the shoe to drop, trust me I'm not. But I'm trying to be as realistic as possible, because I think sometimes that's what's lacking in this House, and it's lacking in a lot of places: be realistic. I've talked to a lot of you Members opposite and we chat. I think you're all just as realistic as me. You probably can't express it, you don't get the same opportunity as me to express, but I have a lot of respect for a lot of Members in this House, we all feel the same. We're all struggling. We have the same struggles. We all have roads that have to be paved, as my colleague, the Speaker, would understand fully. We all have that. We all have health issues. We all have the same issues.

I think we all have the same common goal. We just have a different way of how to get there.

That's, I guess, why, at the end of the day, you have one party on that side of the House and one party on the Opposition side. They buy your story better; they buy your message better. But we all feel the same way. We all believe in our province but we believe there's a better way to get there.

Speaker, in my last seconds, I want to move the following amendment. I move an amendment, seconded by the Member for Harbour Main, that all the words after the word "That" be deleted in the motion before the House, Motion 1, and the following words be substituted: "this House faults the government for its failure to do enough to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians struggling with the rising cost of living."

I table that amendment.

Thank you very much.

**SPEAKER (Warr):** Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

We will recess the House so we can take a closer look at the amendment.

### Recess

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The amendment is said to be in order.

I recognized the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

I guess when I finished up on my main motion or debate there, I was alluding to the fact of the difficulties faced of every Member in here having to, I suppose, play a role, but ultimately everyone believing in the same message but we're all separated by sides of the House and I guess people in the general public not fully understanding, I think, what we all do on a day-to-day basis. The want and the need and the desire for the general public for wanting us to collaborate, and as a result in 2019, I refer to

that as the minority parliament, and a lot of people were happy about having a minority parliament. They thought we'd collaborate.

And actually, looking back, we probably did do some collaboration. There was some legislation that came through this Legislature. There was some debate back and forth. There was some agreement. Would I say it was a lot of agreement? No, but there was some agreement, and we found happy mediums in certain other places, and a few changes here and there. But ultimately, we come back to 2021, and we're back in a situation where we have majority government facing the Opposition. It's a close majority, but they have majority.

There comes back this problem again: We know better than you. Because we have more votes, we can control what happens in the Legislature. And that's the way our Legislature is made up and, unfortunately, I don't know if we always get the best decisions. I am sure we don't. There are a lot of good things happen here. We'll applaud it.

One thing comes to mind was the most recent announcement: the Bay du Nord Project. We all in this House thought that was a great thing. The Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology walked in on budget day and I shook his hand; good job. Do we agree on everything? No, not at all. But it was good. I complimented him; good job. Premier, good work.

Also, my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, I commend him. I commend our critic, our shadow minister for Industry, Energy and Technology. I commend our shadow minister for Finance. I commend everyone that spoke out. A lot of Members on that side of the House felt the same as we all felt. We all felt the same way.

That was for the betterment of the province. Not for the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador or the Liberal Party of Canada or the oil industry, but for everybody. Everybody benefits by that. I'll be kind but I guess being who I am and most the Members themselves probably understand me, I won't let it totally go. Some people in the House want to have a \$15-an-hour minimum wage up to probably \$20 an hour, but you've got to pay for that. But they

didn't support Bay du Nord. We did. Government, obviously, did. Federal government, obviously, at the end of the day did after some debate. Some people never.

That's unfortunate. But those individuals felt strongly in their belief that we needed to shut things down; we needed to go in another direction. We wrote a letter and, actually, it was offered by me, as Opposition House Leader, to have a debate in the Legislature on Bay du Nord. It wasn't so much about theatrics. I think we all, kind of, were on the same page but I think we felt it was worthy to come in here and show a united front – not to each other; to the public, to the federal government, to our federal MPs, to environmentalists, to the oil and gas industry. This was a huge issue – huge, huge issue.

We were getting emails from all over. From our districts, from people we knew, from friends and former colleagues, you name it, everybody felt very strongly about Bay du Nord. So, again, there were some that didn't agree with it and that's fine; that's their prerogative, but I caution sometimes that – and I'll be kind, like I said; I won't go too hard. But I found that troubling. Because you can't have it all.

I might digress for one second; I can't resist. Some Members of this House remember – and I see the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology grinning. His former colleague, a former Member of this House – actually used to be in my place – used to have a big calculator. It was a big calculator; he could hardly get it under this desk. He'd take it out every time the Third Party would ask for their request and he'd be punching in the numbers, but they were on government side adding up the figures. Finally, the Speaker of the day had to tell him he couldn't bring it in anymore.

It just flashed to me when that was going on, and we wanted to have a debate in the House, and the Third Party decided no, they didn't want the debate, because they didn't agree with Bay du Nord. Me, being me, I'll leave it at that, Mr. Speaker, but I just wanted it to be on record. I got to get it off my chest, so anyway here I go.

So I'll move on from that. But Bay du Nord is great for the province. The Member for Corner Brook – because the departments kind of change

a bit, the advance education – put a tweet out a few days after the Bay du Nord deal was done. We were all applauding it. He basically told us, as Opposition, to go with our cap in hand, go to the Premier and the minister, go on bended knees, and thank him. We owe apologies, basically.

I read it first and you get this phone and you want to start responding, you lay the phone down – I've gotten better at that, too: I lay the phone down and I don't respond. Then I listen and I read some responses. So when I start reading responses, I went: B'y, I don't have to respond; the public just responded. They were telling him they're sick of this foolishness – us and them. This is good for the province, who cares? Like, why are you trying to draw that line down the centre? I just spent the first part of my debate talking about that imaginary line. We sit here and it's like warfare. This is a good thing. I shook the minister's hand and I commend him. I commend everybody who was involved. It's a good thing.

It comes back, I guess, to why the cynicism is in politics, why we hear so much cynicism on a day-to-day basis. We all hear that too, and it bothers me a bit. Earlier today, the Minister of Digital Government read the minister's statement on the elections and it was saying back in the day there was 90 per cent turnout. I mean, I quickly looked at our Leader of the Opposition and I whispered to him: You'll never see it again. There's a reason for that. I don't miss the opportunity to say why, because I think we're all responsible – me included.

But that's something we could go on and debate forever and a day, the improvements we could make. But when we, as a group in this House – like I said, it is warfare sometimes, it shouldn't be but that's the nature of the beast. We celebrate our victories. We're all in here for the right reason; I think we are, it's for the people of this province. It's for the province that we love. So when we come out and we get something that's good for the people of the province, for the economy, for the government of the province, we should all stand and applaud. If it means everyone pat each other on the back, so be it.

We're all united, when you leave this Island, Newfoundlanders are one. You know, we will be in here in warfare, but if you leave this Island, if you walk into a restaurant or bar, the first person you'll gravitate to will be a Newfoundlander if you know they're there. And that's where we're to, no matter where you're to, Canada or the United States or anywhere in this world, if there's a Newfoundlander around, you're next to him. It's just a natural gravity effect; we gravitate to each other.

And it's no harm to celebrate with each other when the good things happen. Actually, I think, as a matter of fact, we don't do enough of that. I think the general public would rather see that any day of the week than partisan tweets and comments from ministers, from MHAs, from any Member, anyone in politics. A lot of political staffers tend to do it, ours included; we've had it over the years. I've never liked it. Comb my Facebook page, you'll never find any of that, or very, very little, unless I'm really strong on something, then it won't be too critical. I tend to stay away from it as much as possible. I don't like it.

Because, again, why we're not at 90 per cent turnout at elections is because of that. Why we're down around the 50s is because of a lot of that. That's the reality, that's acceptance you know.

I had a family member as recently as last week – my mother, who is going through a hard time right now and she said to her, she called her up – my mom has been in the hospital now over a month, she's going into surgery again tomorrow. I go over every day. She said she called her and said she was fuming. She was after calling, she was saying that crowd in the House of Assembly all they does is they likes to listen to themselves talk. They like to listen to themselves.

So I was there trying to smile. I said, you know, Mom, don't mind that. Oh no, she said. So anyway, even though she's sick and whatever else, she spoke her mind to this lady who happened to be her sister. She clearly told her what she thought or what she said and she didn't appreciate it. She said my son is over there, and the rest of them can't be that bad, you've got no business saying what you've said. I said if I could find another couple of hundred thousand

like you, we might get back up to 90 per cent showing at the polls.

It's lighthearted but it's true. It's so true that this is my own family making that – that's the general consensus. Now, you know, it's not that I don't visit her every day, but it's family. They don't understand, they think sometimes, oh yeah, here this person goes again or that person goes. But we've all got a common goal.

As recently as a few weeks ago, the Premier actually reached out to me about my mom. We were back and forth and I appreciated that. I asked a few questions, and to his credit, he was very kind to me and I thanked him. He said, you know, it's never bad to lean on each other. It's a different group, the 40 of us, we come in here and fight and whatever else, but we all have the same common goal.

I say to the Premier, I couldn't agree with you more. We have a different way of getting there. We have a different vehicle to get there. Our vehicle is a different colour and runs differently from your vehicle but we're all on the same road. That is the reality; we're all on the same road, different colour rigs. Ours burn more gas than yours, obviously, because if not it would have been something more in the budget. Our homes are more expensive to heat than yours because there would have been something in the budget.

I'm going to try not to go down that path, Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to get better. I've been at this for years and I said last year, and there is a common joke among caucus now that the little man is on my shoulder, right. I try to keep him in check when I start digressing; I try to pull myself back. I always keep that in mind, but there are a lot of angles that I could go on the roads and the vehicles and gas and all that but I'm going to leave that for now.

Last year, I stood in the House and I spoke on this amendment and much to the chagrin of the Minister of Finance again – there were no hard feelings over it but there was a bit of banter back and forth. My theme was: They don't know. They don't know. Everything I said was they don't know. Every question we asked no one knew nothing that was in the budget so I came to the conclusion – it was after an election and

whatnot – nobody knew, the budget was put together but they didn't know. I don't think they honestly did know then. They figured it out eventually but at that time, they didn't know.

So we're getting into this year and it's a full year in. Just recently, today or yesterday, it was a year since we got sworn in since the last election. Fourth year under us now to come out with a budget, so they know more details this year, no doubt about it; much more detailed reading the budget, we're not guessing at stuff anymore, which is good.

But my theme this year is: They don't get it. When we say over here you're out of touch, that is not meant to be – it may be taken as being nasty or condescending or direct. That's the frustration we hear from our people we speak to in our districts. The stories I hear my colleagues say, I haven't told you, I have lots of stories, too. I have been back and forth to the hospital with my mom for four months now and I've seen a lot of things that are not so good. But I hear a lot of stories in the House from colleagues around here: they're not making them up. They're real life stories.

So when you see a budget like we just seen, it's hard to say government is getting it; hard not to say you're out of touch.

One of the comments yesterday, the Minister of Tourism did a great job coming back at us over the commentary on NASCAR. Fair game, that's what we're here for. But it's not for now, that's not meant for now. That's being out of touch. We said that's fine next year.

Yeah, he came back at us good, and I give him credit for that, but ultimately we're not knocking NASCAR, we're knocking the timing of NASCAR. That's the part of being out of touch. I've said to him several times, it's not about that, it's about the timing of it, not about Come Home Year.

You're promoting Come Home Year. This one here is one I can go a long ways on but I'll try to tie this one tight, too. It's Come Home Year. It's a wonderful thing. But what are you coming home to? No rental cars. If you find a rental car, you can't afford to put gas in it. Then if you find enough money for gas in the rental car, a lot of

the roads, especially what I hear out around Baie Verte and that, are not that good to drive on. I know Harbour Main roads and Roddickton roads and there are a lot of other roads that have been brought to our attention – Colinet and Witless Bay.

We still have COVID. You're going into places now – and I'm so COVIDed out. I'm so done with COVID but it's still here, it's still with us. So we're going to go and we're going to have Come Home Year. As the minister said, there will be singing and dancing, parties and festivals. I'm not so sure it will be. It remains to be seen.

I'm going to things in my district, not a lot but some things. There's still a fair level of concern.

Today, I did a Member's statement on sports awards at the Hibernia Centre. It's a pretty big event up in CBS. There are a lot of people up there who attend these awards. Well, I'd say this year we probably had half-empty tables. This person couldn't be there for their award because of COVID. This person was out because of COVID. This person's husband has COVID, true story.

This is April now, we're a couple of weeks away from May, Easter, and we're hearing there's another wave coming. Again, it's not about Come Home Year, it's about when you're trying to do this.

I guess the bigger thing is: Why are you trying to do it? What's this really ultimately about? I've stood here many times and I've said: It's smoke and mirrors. I think it was yesterday I said: Are we in an alternate universe? This is not adding up, what I'm hearing coming across, some of the commentaries. Something is not right here. It's not what we're hearing and if we stop listening, and not only me – I'm not talking about me – I'm talking about everyone. If we stop listening to what the people are telling us, it's pretty sad.

And that's what I find a lot of the time. When I say you're out of touch, not one individual, I think generally, there are a lot of people out of touch. I think the federal government, a lot of MPs across the board; people are not really tuned in to the big issues.



The cost of living, people struggling; that will never go away. There's no cure that's going to fix that forever and a day. No government will ever be able to cure all. But this government was widely regarded as having the best poverty reduction strategy in the country. At the time, it was said one of the best poverty reduction strategies in North America, I remember back in the day. But when this current administration took over – the Liberal Party under a different leader – no, get rid of that because it was done by the Tories. Not that it was good. No one cared about that. They don't want that. That was highly regarded as being a very successful, well-applauded program. It met a lot of measures. But what's been put in place of that? Nothing.

The Minister of Education, today, said about the home oil rebate and something else is gone into this subsidy. It already existed. There are no new measures. So you go to license your vehicle, you save \$60 or \$90 or something. Home insurance, you save a few dollars. But on the home insurance policy – I was talking to someone there recently on that, actually, it's regressive because the higher the value of your home, the higher the insurance policy. So really the ones who benefit the most are the ones with the more expensive homes.

A lot of low-income people are not living in their own home. They don't worry about home insurance; maybe content insurance on an apartment. Is that really benefitting them? No. You see that graphic that was debated there in the House and the Premier, which I commend; he acknowledged that wasn't the best use of time and energy. I hope they never paid much for the graphic because it just missed the mark. That's the line: yeah, it missed the mark.

Why did it miss the mark? Maybe because people that are around that deciding and approving that are out of touch with what is really needed. If you would have showed me that six months ago, or even six days, or six hours before the budget, you didn't have to give me much time to look at that. Wow, why would you ever put that out?

The night after the budget, I think, I seen it on Twitter and I went, oh, my God. I was on my phone and I screenshot it, I said this is

unbelievable. I couldn't believe that this was actually trying to be sold as an answer.

And this past weekend, I was again looking through Twitter, I might have been at the hospital, I don't know, and it was Liberal outreach day, selling the budget. Do you know what? I always look at certain things and if it's good enough, it should sell itself. You don't have to do Liberal outreach; don't have to do PC outreach. If you have a good budget, people applaud it. There's not a lot of applause.

Now, they're not on the steps because it's not a lot of austerity like it was in 2016. So that's the bittersweet part of it. People are: Okay, well, fair enough, we can still survive. We're not getting the legs cut out from under us. But is it a great budget? No. It misses the mark on seniors and low-income people. I can't say that enough because the stories we're hearing are just frightening.

And then you flip over into the health care issues, they're just off the charts. You've got a doctor or you've got a physician crying on the television because they can't get surgeries done. Really? That's a big, big, big statement. I mean, I've never seen a surgeon worried about getting surgeries. They're crying because they're doing too many, not crying because they can't get in to do them. That's totally backwards of what we're thinking. Imagine. Does that mean we've got a good health care system? A functioning health care system?

You know, you go over to emergency – my heart goes out to those people working in emergency rooms, it's incredible. It's absolutely incredible. We speak about it and repeat it and repeat it, not only just family doctors and other services, we repeat ourselves over and over again, but it seems to fall on deaf ears.

You know, the Premier says it's broken; our health care system is broken. I know first-hand he says, I work in the system, I'm a doctor, I get it. I understand it. And that's nice, they're all words, but words have got to have more meaning than just words. The words are empty sometimes.

The Minister of Health and Community Services stood in this place for seven years, over seven

years now, and it's the same thing over and over again, in a very confident and sometimes borderline on the: I know better than you. I've heard that said before, too. I think sometimes he feels that way, and maybe he does. He knows more about medical than I'll ever know and a lot of us in this House, no question of that.

But a lot of people in this House and a lot of people on this side of the House know what people are going through. They talk to people in their communities. You can be confident and feel like you're doing everything right and all of our concerns don't mean nothing, not to the people that we talk to. The minister can make those comments, and I've heard it said before, the minister seems so (inaudible), he brushed that off. He seemed so confident. Sure, he should be, he's a doctor. Does that mean he has it figured out? No.

You can go to a garage and the mechanic can tell you all the things you want to hear. Does he fix your car properly? Does he give you the right diagnosis? Not necessarily. There are doctors like that. It's fine to have people that are qualified there, that know their stuff. The Premier is another doctor, my God, fix it; fix our health care system. I'd be the first one to applaud you, no different than Bay du Nord.

If I wake up one day and our health care system is much better functioning than what it is now – and that will take time – there will be no one happier than me. We have a Health Accord that came out. It's a futurist document. It's not going to fix our problems now; it's not. I commend Dr. Parfrey and Sister Davis, wonderful people, done a great job, no question asked. It's a good document. But it's a starting document. It's not going to fix it.

I already spoke about my own district. I'm not going to get a family doctor any faster tomorrow because of the Health Accord, not even next year, maybe the year after. Who knows, I may be long out of politics before it ever comes into being.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** If any of it's implemented.

**B. PETTEN:** If any of it's implemented. We don't even know if it's going to be implemented.

That's just a document now. We know a lot of documents kicking around – lots of documents. They get shelved. They collect dust. They fade in the window. I've seen them over the years; the sun is shining in on them and the colours of the coat of arms fade away. You have to look close to read the words on them. There was a lot of money spent on a lot of these reports. They stand on the window ledge and they fade. We had the Moya Greene report, the McIntosh report, the McKinsey report, the Gilroy report and the ambulance review. We stand in the House, we ask those questions, but nothing changes.

Am I cynical? Probably. I have good reason to be cynical; a lot of good reasons to be cynical, that's facts. That's not me concocting something.

As someone that worked in mental health for a long time, along with my colleague from Cape St. Francis, actually we go back a long ways. Being a member of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, it's something I took great pride in. I was late joining it, but I took great pride in. I had a lot of belief in that report, when the report was put together and we released it, a lot of hope.

I've asked that question in the House here many times and the Minister of Health and Community Services, again, stood in his place very confidently and gave me answers. If you're out on the street listening to what he is said, you'd never question a word. I'm the one that seems like I don't have a clue what I'm talking about. He's listing off, he has this one and this one and that recommendation and that one. I only got two left and they're clapping and everyone is saying woo-hoo and I'm over there saying: Wow, everyone must be lying to me. That's not what I'm hearing. That's not what everyone else is hearing in their districts.

I had four messages on my phone last night and, only for confidentiality, I'd like to let you listen to them. Do you know what four of them were about? Waiting to get in to The Recovery Centre. Now, we're several years into this so-called access to services and improvements in mental health and addictions. The road map is supposed to be well in place for that now. There are a lot of great people in that department – a

lot of great people. I know a lot of them and they're wonderful people. But the captain of that ship got to steer it in the right direction. This government has to give the proper funding to be able to make that happen. There has to be a willingness. It is not there. I'm sorry, it is not there.

When I can get up tomorrow and ask another question or next time we're in this House and can ask another question and the minister can show me up to make me seem like I have no idea what I am talking about – and maybe that is a credit to him, but one thing that he shouldn't take credit in or any pride in is the mental health and addictions report, *Towards Recovery*. Right now, it is getting a failing grade. The report itself is great, but it is only as good as the government that wants to implement the report and it is not happening.

The people in this province that are suffering with mental health and addictions – and trust me, I know many and we all know many, all of us, it is not helping them. Just to emphasize and it hits me, I suppose, personally because there are lot of mental health issues in my own family. When I was on that Committee, there was a lady who tried three times, maybe four, to commit suicide. She finally succeeded. But along the way, we heard the stories. She cried out for help each time. Her own doctor told us the story, in consulting with us. The system failed her.

The minister was there in that room when we heard those stories. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change was also there. We heard that story; she eventually succeeded. But you know what? I felt we're going to prevent this stuff from happening anymore. It is happening every single day of the week, all over the place; I am hearing it. I had a young man in my district, great guy, 25 years old. By all reports, he was crying out for help. I read a Facebook post hours before it happened. It is a sad story and I knew him. He used to reach out to me on a lot of things trying to help me. He was helping his buddies all the time. He was going: Barry, I need to help me buddy. I need to try to get a permit for me buddy. And I took a liking to him because everyone was his buddy.

But he needed a buddy, and they weren't there, Mr. Speaker. And the ultimate blame on that comes down to mental health and addictions. The help has to be there. It's no good to send you off to a navigator, and the navigator tells you we'll get back to you in two weeks' time. And this navigator is a great person, too. They're not magicians. They're not Houdini; they're not Copperfield; they can't create something that's not there. So while all this is happening, and it's happening every day in front of us, do we hear these good-news stories, the happiness, the ultimate photo op?

We're here the first day back in the House and the Premier doesn't show up. He's up watching the televised address by Zelenskyy, the president of Ukraine – sad story. We watched it in the caucus room and then came in the House. No photo ops. We watched it, came in the House and debated paying government's bills, doing Interim Supply. But I seen it all over Twitter; he was up getting photo ops.

You didn't have to go to Ottawa to watch it on television. There are more important things to do here. We're faced with the biggest cyberattack in Canadian history – biggest cyberattack ever. That's a fact; that's not my words. He was in Scotland for a photo op – a photo shoot, really, because there were pictures coming from every angle. It was him and staff, there were pictures and it was a beautiful backdrop of the environment conference, the sea – whatever the name, this big thing, and the prime minister was there.

Like, really? We're on our knees here. He was nowhere to be found. Does that instill confidence? Does that sound like out of touch? Is that going to help the confidence of the people to get from 50 to 90 per cent in voter turnout? Not likely. It's pretty sad, actually. You know when you go home – and I remember that time, we were there in the House and someone said: Is the House open today? I said: Yeah. The Premier wasn't there? No, b'y. I can't answer for the Premier. Again, it comes down to my much-used term here in the House: talking to the people.

And I'm not lined up and down on the doorstep to Tim Hortons or in the drive-through every day or in the supermarket lined up, sitting down

waiting for someone to come in and talk to me. That's not what I'm doing. But I talk to people. I know it's not a shock to anyone in this House, but I'll go around, I'll have a yarn with all the crowd in there, and that's just who I am. I like to do that.

They say those things, and what can I say? Believe it or not, actually, out of my respect for the House of Assembly and elected officials, there are actually times that I'd probably defend them, to try to soften the blow. I'm not that bad. I guess it was something important they had to go do.

But realistically, that's not accurate. That's not really accurate. You had a cyberattack – and even to this day, we got an update about a week or two ago, if I'm not mistaken, and our leader spoke out on it and that. My wife got a letter last week. Her personal information was hacked. A lot of people in this House here were all hacked. That's new to her. We asked several months ago.

This is not political. This is people's lives. This is people's privacy. This is people's personal health information. Sweet God, nothing is meant to political about this. It doesn't mean we hope more Tories get hacked than the Liberals. That's not what this is about. But you know that's what is created here. That's what we've created in this House. And that's what continues on day after day after day. There is no one here who can be more political than me – nobody. But I tell you, I try to be as realistic as possible, though, and call it for what it is. It's politics. A lot of times this stuff is politics.

I tend to find, again, being reflective – I don't know if this means I am coming to an end of my career but (inaudible). I had to tell the qualifying people that I'm telling them, not because I'm a Tory – no offence to the Liberals; there are a lot of good people over there. I find I am always qualifying a lot of the things I say with that statement because that's truly and honestly the way I feel.

Now, I've gotten in this House some times and I've had pretty good roundabouts in this House with the Government House Leader over there. Me and him have had many, many a good debate – healthy debate. At the end of the day,

Mr. Speaker, he knew like I knew, we all knew, it was fighting for what you believed. You had to fight. You have to fight.

I came into this Legislature pretty green. I remember the first time I stood – I think it was a Member's statement and I was nothing but marbles. Everything that come out of my mouth – my mouth was stuck together. I couldn't get a word out. I said: Wow, how am I ever going to get through this? And then I realized – and I remember the former premier of the day, one time I said the wrong word – nothing too serious. He gave me a lesson. He was a lot more seasoned and the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology had a few good goes. I went home a few days and I said I've got to soon toughen up. I said if I'm going to go in there, if I'm going to represent my district and do what I'm supposed to do, what people elected me to do, I've got to toughen up.

So I guess I did. But, at the end of the day, though, I had to represent my district. If I never spoke up for my district and for the people I represented, and even in my critic roles for the people I represent in those roles, whether it be students now and people all over the province with the roads, I wasn't going to do my job. I think every one of us here all do the same thing. Every minister on that side of the House, they take their oath and they do the same thing. Once again, it's a common goal.

But we have to stop missing the mark. I say out of touch and not getting it. That's where you're missing the mark. People are struggling. The Minister of Finance said a couple of weeks ago: My five-point plan for cost of living probably fell short. We're going to do more in the budget. That's where the disappointment kicked in. Because when the budget came out it was like, really, that's what you're doing? That's your plan for seniors and that's your plan for the cost of living and low-income people? That's where the problem lies.

Speaker, I'm looking at the clock and there are a few things – and this is my pet peeve, my pet project for this last year. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure tells me I'm obsessed with Liberal friends. Maybe I am, I don't know. What I'm obsessed with is \$150 million on just the penitentiary roughly that

we're looking at on a sole-source bidder. I don't think it's right. I think it's wrong. If we have to wait three years to get it right, I could care less. But that's enough money to make you rethink the project.

Everyone says we need a new penitentiary; we've needed it for years. When we were in government, we were trying to get it. But this sole-source bidder is a problem. I don't care if you're a Liberal friend or not, that's wrong. To push ahead with something like that, I will not support it. I will not stop talking about it every opportunity I get – and I've done that and I'll continue to do it. I know there are a lot of people around in that industry that are probably not too pleased with me saying it, involved with the penitentiary, and I'm not going to stop talking about it. Because that's outrageous for a government of any colour to sit down and tell me and tell the people of this province that spending an extra \$100 million with one bidder on a \$300-million project is right; it is absolutely wrong.

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

**B. PETTEN:** You can do fairness, (inaudible) it's not going to work. It's wrong. That's not political; it's wrong.

Now, maybe it's because of the colour of politics that played there, I don't know, but I could care less. Mental health hospital there, that's fine. Actually, that was one of the recommendations from our report. It's \$39 million over. The winning bid was \$39 million extra and a year longer to get it built. But –

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

**B. PETTEN:** Oh, they all felt that they met the criteria and checked the boxes.

We seen after with the documents and the fairness monitor. I mean, you can make it work. You can pretty well subject it and you can make that fit into any box. But ultimately, another \$40 million, that's \$200 million. I don't think it needed to go to any company when you had a bidder that was cheaper. But again, the minister of the day – not the current minister, the former minister corrected me and told me no, it wasn't \$40 million, because I used the word “forty” for

simplicity. No, he said, it was \$39 million. Was he wrong? No. Was it making a slight of an important matter? Absolutely.

If he was sitting on this side of the House, and we reversed roles, would he not be telling me the same thing? Absolutely. But what I would respond back to him – unless I was told I can't say it, then I'd have to say the truth, I can't say it – I'd say I agree with you. It shouldn't have happened. But it comes down to you're selling a message, because you have no other choice. You're told I guess by Cabinet this is the decision and we're going to go with it. So you have to defend it. I've seen that in this House and long before I ever came here and when I leave, you defend many decisions to protect government.

But it's not right. It's still not right. So we're up to \$200 million there now. Hearing all kinds of stories from the Corner Brook hospital out there, all kinds out there. So we don't know where that's gone. We have a long-term care in Grand Falls and Gander. That was an interesting one, because that went over by a year, or roughly a year. Officials were at wit's end trying to deal with the department and couldn't get any answers. Families, people moved out there, bought homes. They ended up having to sell them, at a loss. Who covers the cost for that? No, no answers.

Minister asked for a comment; no answer. Officials were asked for response; no response, no comment – \$120 million, \$140 million and people are still not in the beds. There was a ribbon cutting a couple of weeks ago and everything is wonderful. It's going to happen; stay tuned. But why? Why does it have to be that way? Why does the local MHA have to plead for a response on when this is going to open? Why? Because he's not on that side of the House, is that why?

But no, they're going to put a Premier's office out there now. They don't feel they can get enough activity; can't get enough answers. We have two MHAs out there, and two good MHAs.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Two solid MHAs representing that area. We don't need a Premier's office out

there. We don't need an office out there wasting I don't know how much money we're looking at \$200,000, \$300,000, or whatever it's going to cost. Why, because you haven't got two MHAs with constituency offices and two capable MHAs out there with their staff? It's insulting.

That doesn't help that senior today who is trying to fill up their oil barrel. That don't help all them people out in the District of Exploits that are looking for a family doctor, people out in Grand Falls-Windsor who are struggling with emergency services. They're all struggling to fill their oil barrels, too – same people.

But no, we'll spend \$200,000 or \$300,000 to look after a few friends and put them out there and we want to be representing the Central Newfoundland region. Oh, we have to be there. Well, if you're at that, then put a Premier's office right across – if you have that much money floating around, put one everywhere.

It doesn't matter. If people have a problem in CBS, they come to me. If they have a problem in Stephenville - Port au Port, they go to the Member. That is what you're put there for. It is an insult to our Legislature. If the Premier stood in this House and said that, you don't feel like they have representation out there. No, you don't have a Liberal out there but there is an MHA from this Legislature out there. It is two of 40. That should be enough.

It doesn't have to be your own people in an office out there taking calls. What calls are you taking? What calls are you taking, really? They don't even have a phone hooked up. I don't think they even have a phone number yet. Sure, what calls are you taking? I mean, really, come on. Arranging combinations when they come through the drive-through out there. Maybe one of the Liberal outreach days or something they're going to arrange lunch for them or something. Really, what are they at?

If you had a problem trying to get a family doctor, you got a problem with the roads, you got a problem with seniors getting a personal care home, you're calling the local MHA's office. You know that's who you're calling. They'll answer your call. They have phone numbers set up. They have staff. They're capable of doing it.

That irritates me, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is wrong. I've been speaking for quite a while now and it flies right in the face with what I started off with. We're on both sides of the House, we are different colours, party stripes, but at the end of the day, I go back to all the things I've said, Bay du Nord and everything else, you got people wanting collaboration. That's what this is about. Do they really, truly want collaboration? It is a word. Actions, no words. Because if you really wanted collaboration and to do things right, you'd be supportive of your MHAs in all of these rural districts right through the province.

Next time around, game on, and you put a candidate out there and you try to win that seat, fair enough, based on your policies, your leadership, you as the individual – fair game. But right now, the voters have spoken; this is the way the Legislature is laid out until the next election when it is dissolved. We have to live with what we have. Right now, there are 40 qualified Members in this House and trying to do their job, and I think it is incumbent on everyone in this House to be respectful of that.

If a Member of this House is calling a minister and is asking for help in their district, they should get a response. I think it is offensive. You're emailing and you're calling various ministers – I'm not going to name any ministers; they individually may know who they are. It is not right. I never said the ones who do or don't; I'm not going to name them. I'm going to be kind, but there are several here that will not do it: not one, not two, more. That's not cool. That's not what we're elected for. That's not what the people of the province expect. People of the province think that we can talk to a minister any time we want. But do you know what? That's the way our Legislature is really supposed to be designed. This is the Legislative Branch. They are the elected officials. They've got the most seats. They form the government.

Fair enough, we all know that. But we have a role to play, too. You know, it is 18 Members on this side of the House. That takes up a fair bit of the population. They got a lot of issues, too. So, imagine, look at that now, so you're not going to respond – certain parts are not going to respond to this number – look at the population of the province, a big chunk over here. So are you the

Liberal minister or are you the Minister of the Crown?

And, again, that's not every minister – not every minister. There are lot of ministers in this House, I'll flick them an email and they'll be very kind and generous and no issues. The crux of the matter of what I'm trying to get to is some ministers do that and it's offensive. You know, it's offensive and you call them out, you go at them – you try to publicly go at them and you're penalized for that. There's a punishment for that. It's retribution. Don't cross that line. That's sad.

It's a sad statement where we are now as a province if that's the way we're governing. That's the way this is. But that's the feeling I've gotten over the last couple of years, especially. It's never been worse. I've been around this place, either here or there, for a nice while now and I can pass a relatively educated guess on it. I don't know if it has ever been so bad. It may have been worse but not to my knowledge.

Could it have been improved at different times, back at certain things? I agree, some things were not done right. But, as a whole, I think, right now, it's worse than we've ever seen it. So when you're looking for help – and when I say out of touch and not getting it, the photo ops are not going to solve your problems, Mr. Speaker. That's not helping nobody. It looks nice. It's so superficial. I find everything is just on the surface. It's nothing bored down into. You feel sometimes it's all just window dressing. It's all just to make things look good. There's nothing really structurally changing. These reports that are fading on the window ledges, they're still fading. And if we get a nice summer, we might not be able to read most of them. I guess we'll just go on and we'll spend another \$10 million or \$20 million next year on another round of reports because that's what happens.

So it buys you time. It used to be a forum and they always love to do a consultant. We'll have a consultant look into it. Then that got mocked to the degree that you don't hear that as much now. Now you'll get expert analyses when you get these reports done. That's buying some time. That soon is going to lose its legs, too. These reports can only go so long. You're elected to make decisions. The government of the day is

there to make decisions. Do what people elect you to do – govern.

But listen, remember, there are 40 of us here. Not 22, 40. We represent a lot of the population and we expect to be respected. There's nothing wrong with us to demand respect. You don't have to like us, but respect the position; respect the office that we operate out of. Our faces may change, but these seats won't. There'll be someone else at this desk one day, and every desk in this House. On that side or this side or whatever side of the House, but you should always respect the person that's in that seat because they are speaking for the people that put them there, no matter what district they're in.

I find it irritates me to no end because I always find – and I've been here long enough now and I'll be here for a while yet – that's one of the most irritating things in this House of Assembly, in this government, what you listen to on a day-to-day basis, on a year-to-year basis, and some things never change. Why you have to do what you have to do to get the littlest thing done is unbelievable – unbelievable.

I look at the other side and I see some announcements and monies that flow so easy and you feel like you're going in – like I said, like the Member for Corner Brook said when they got the Bay du Nord – cap in hand and crawl over and bow for them to do such a deal. Well, I feel like that if you want a pothole fixed. You know, go with your cap, beg, be right nice, or you won't get it done. If you don't be nice, you're not getting it done. Mr. Speaker, that's pretty distasteful and I think it's time for it to end.

As for this budget, the public don't appreciate it, I don't think. We don't appreciate it. It doesn't address the issues that are out there today. Again, it's a government in my opinion that are out of touch, they don't get it and they're not going to get it until they listen to the people and listen to debate and answer some questions. Do you know what? Tell people the truth. People want the facts. Tell them the facts. Health care is broken. Tell them health care is broken.

Tell them, yeah, the cost of living is out of control. Absolutely. If you're not going to reduce the provincial tax on gas, tell them why.

Tell them why you didn't come in with a home oil rebate. Tell the people that. Don't just tell them you've done something else. Sure, we don't understand half of what's being said from them responses. How can you tell the people? Tell the people the cold hard facts, tell them why you can't do it, but don't try to window dress.

On the face of not telling people why you can't help them out, when we find they're spending money on some things that could be spent in another year, one being the NASCAR, it's really distasteful. Seniors of the province and low income don't appreciate it. I don't and I don't think any of us should.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

It's a pleasure to rise and I will try and be relevant because this is speaking to the amendment. The amendment as worded is: This House faults the government for its failure to do enough to help with the cost of living.

I really struggle sometimes because it's ironic that the problems that we inherited get thrown back on us because we find a solution and we have to bring these back.

There is a cost of living that we have mitigated and it relates to the cost of electricity. The cost of electricity without those measures would add about \$2,400 a year to the average household expenses. The challenge we have is that we, as government, to avoid that going directly out of people's pockets, have had to divert money from revenues to do that each year.

Each year we divert from revenues, and will have to for the foreseeable long term, approximately the same amount of money that would build 360 long-term care beds every year for as long as it's paid.

We've been told about choices, and that's a choice we had to make because without it, \$2,400 would come out of every household

every year in perpetuity. That's a choice, we made it and it addresses the cost of living for a fairly typical, stereotypical Newfoundland and Labrador family.

There is a lot in this budget that we could talk about. My own department, I think, has done a stellar job managing its finances, yet meeting the requirements of a variety of projects going back over seven years. The All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions recommended, as one of its recommendations, that we increase the proportion of the health care budget each year that's spent on mental health and addictions. We have done that.

The Member opposite presents pictures of doom and gloom. We have taken low-barrier, walk-in mental health services in this country to a new level. Whilst COVID has stressed mental health and addictions – people are uneasy, they're anxious and that is perfectly understandable. Through those clinics and other mechanisms, we have seen a 40 per cent increase in demand for mental health and addictions services. Yet, at the same time, those individuals, the number of those individuals requiring that service who have had to wait has dropped by 41 per cent, despite that increase. That I regard as an investment; that I regard as something tangible for those people who need it.

I am conscious of the time of day, Mr. Speaker, and because of that, bearing in mind other pressures on the Members of the House, I would move, seconded by the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, to adjourn debate.

**SPEAKER:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.



**J. HAGGIE:** Wearing my other hat as deputy Deputy Government House Leader, I move, seconded by the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, that this House do now adjourn until May 2 at 1:30 p.m.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that this House do now stand adjourned.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, May 2, 2022, at 1:30 p.m.